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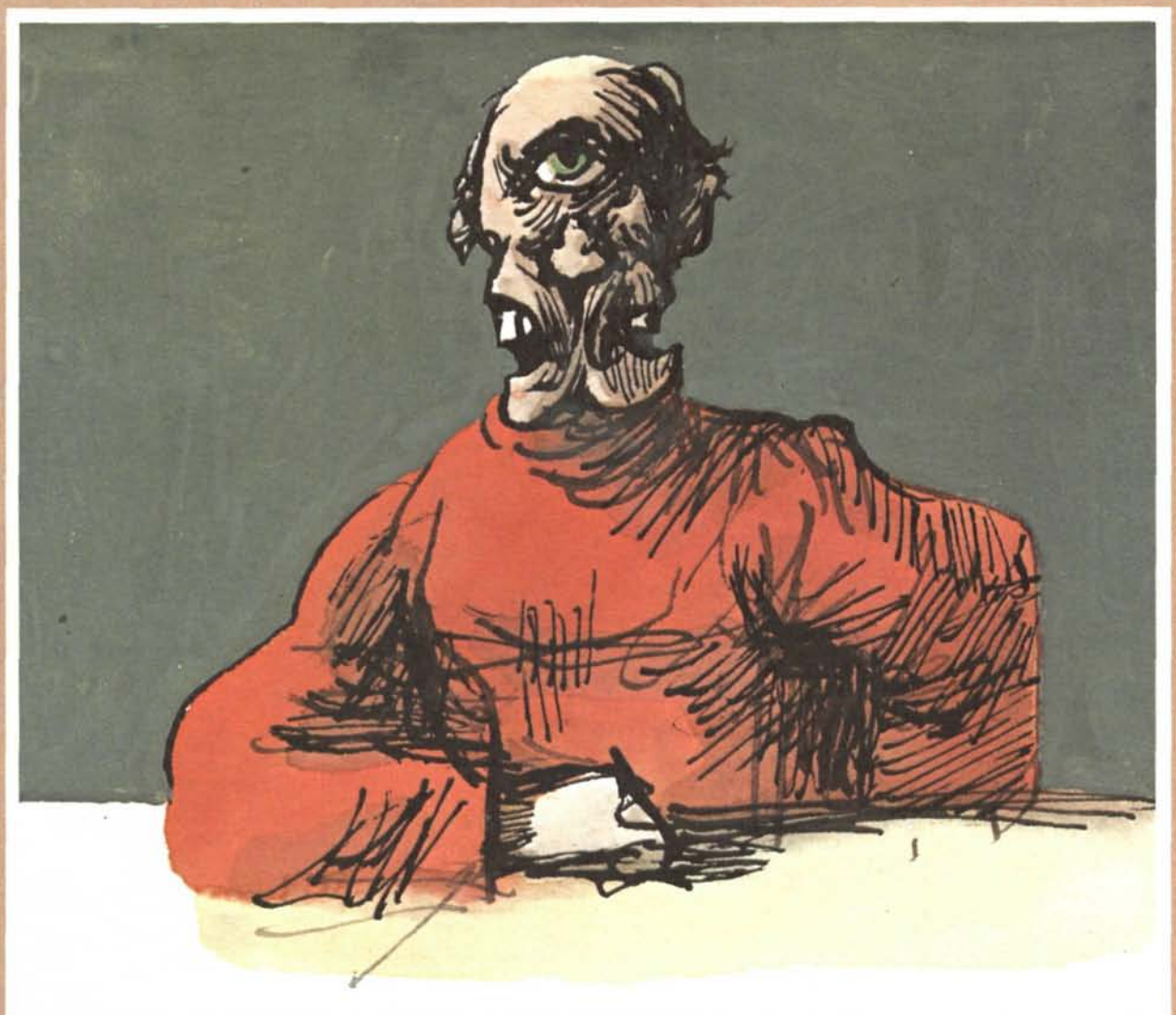
CHRONICLES OF CULTURE

LETTERS & ARTS

MORALS & MANNERS



1984

VOLUME 8 NUMBER 1 JANUARY 1984

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COMMENT

George Orwell's *1984.* We're almost there. Or are we? Walter Cronkite thinks the danger looms, and if anyone speaks for the "thinking" American it is surely Walter Cronkite. He said it again in a special preface to the Orwell novel in 1983, as the fatal year approached. After ticking off the menace of orbiting satellites that can read license plates in a parking lot, computers that can tap into thousands of telephone calls, and scientists investigating the "vast potential" of genetic engineering, Cronkite warned (a touch of prudence creeping in), "1984 may not arrive on time, but there's always 1985."

It may come as a disappointment to those who think they get original thought from the giants of American television to learn that there is not a single idea in Cronkite's "Special Preface" to the New American Library edition of Orwell's novel published in 1983 that is not present in the "Afterword" to the same edition written by Erich Fromm 22 years earlier, in 1961. Fromm, a refugee from nazi Germany who became famous for his *Escape From Freedom*—an analysis of the totalitarianism of the right—was peculiarly sanguine about dangers emanating from the totalitarianism of the left, and warns in the last line of his analysis of the Orwell book: "... it would be most unfortunate if the reader smugly interpreted *1984* as another description of Stanlinist barbarism, and if he does not see that it means us, too."

1984 is not just "another description" of Stalinist barbarism. Those have been written for us by people who experienced the system firsthand, from Victor Serge to Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn to Anton Antonov-Ovseyenko. *1984* is a nightmare vision of the communist world—unrealistic, maybe, carried to extremes, perhaps, but possessing a mythic quality of such power that, along with Arthur Koestler's *Darkness at Noon,* it became the *livre de chevet* of an entire class of American leaders who, with nazi Germany defeated, swung all of their considerable will and energy into resistance to that other totalitarian system, communism.

It requires a peculiarly convoluted mind—which might be called an example of the New Doublethink—to read *1984* today, knowing the history, goals, and techniques of the communist system, and think that the book has anything at all to do with our kind of society. Admittedly, since Orwell's death, we have witnessed a vast expansion of the electronic, computer, and electro-optical industries that could greatly increase the potential for surveillance of its citizens by a police state—if we had such a state. But the surveillance systems (two-way television sets in every home, electronic bugging even in parks) are merely ancillary futuristic devices. The heart of *1984* is the nature of the society depicted—a society exercising total control over the minds of its citizens, preventing even that once-famous horror of the masters of the Kremlin, the "revolt within the skull." One has only to read 10 pages of *1984* to see that every single one of the features of this nightmare world is almost a straight-line extrapolation of the innovative—and to Orwell utterly hateful—characteristics of the Soviet system. Winston Smith, the book's protagonist, works at the Ministry of Truth, where his job is to rewrite history. He remembers perfectly well (and this is the sort of thing that will be his eventual undoing) that four years earlier Oceania, his country, had been allied with Eurasia in a war against Eastasia. But now that the alliances have been reversed and his country is in alliance with *Eastasia* in a war against *Eurasia,* all references to the earlier alignment have been erased from every printed record and, ostensibly, from the minds of the people of Oceania.

Now, during the decade or so before Orwell wrote *1984,* the Soviet Union had carried out some of the most spectacular volte-faces in history. Before Hitler came to power, communists had hated Social Democrats and called them "social fascists," but when Moscow realized its policy had been a stupendous error and formed the grand and glorious Popular Front, Socialists became beloved brothers in arms and all references to their earlier pariah status were banned. Then, in 1939, when Stalin signed his famous Non-Aggression Pact with Hitler, all negative references to Hitler were suddenly obliterated and it became a crime throughout the U.S.S.R. to use the word "fascist." But when, only two years later, Hitler attacked the Soviet Union, all references to the earlier German alliance were banned and eradicated from the historical record. To this day, the tradition continuing in an attenuated form, one looks in vain for the names of Soviet rulers Lavrenti Beria and Georgi Malenkov (not to mention Trotsky) in the Soviet Encyclopedia. They are not there. They have been "vaporized," to use Orwell's word. They are "non-persons." They

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have disappeared down the "memory hole." At no time has any government in the West, above all the United States, attempted anything remotely resembling this official attempt to rewrite the past. When World War II broke out and the earlier policy of appeasement was totally discredited, no one attempted to claim that it had never existed. There was, in fact, some brooding about the mistaken policy. Many loose ends remained loose. When the wartime Soviet alliance was in full sway and the plea went out for Russian War Relief, there were always voices to be heard chiding mordantly, "And what happened to Finnish War Relief?"

But, central as it is to *1984,* the rewriting of history is only one of hundreds of the book's themes taken straight from the model of Soviet totalitarianism. On the novel's second page we hear of the current "Three Year Plan"—whereas the Soviet Union was famous for its Five Year Plans. Within the next few pages we encounter references to "shortages" (still a feature of the Soviet system), the fact that there were "no longer any laws" (true de facto of the Soviet Union for crimes against the state and de jure of communist China in all areas until only the last few years), "the Party," the "Inner Party," "forced-labor camps," the daily "Two Minute Hate" (here he anticipated Peking, which in 1950 was already instituting "Hate Weeks"), and, of course, the "Thought Police" (this term borrowed from the Japanese, who, under the military clique that led them in World War II, literally had "Thought Police"). But perhaps the most telltale figure of all is "Emmanuel Goldstein," Enemy of the People:

> the renegade and backslider who . . . had been one of the leading figures of the Party, almost on a level with Big Brother himself, and then had engaged in counterrevolutionary activities . . . All subsequent crimes against the Party, all treacheries, acts of sabotage, heresies, deviation, sprang directly out of his teaching.

Goldstein is such a transparent surrogate for Trotsky that it is hard to imagine what figure even Erich Fromm could have found to offer as the personage that President Reagan, for example, might currently use for his "Goldstein." Even the suggestion is ludicrous. And all these examples are taken from only the first 10 pages of *1984.* As the novel proceeds, its hatred for a system of government which aspires to total control of all institutions of society and every one of its citizens becomes even more intense.

Featured in the March 1984 issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Jorge Luis Borges's address on the occasion of the presentation of the first T.S. Eliot Award for Creative Writing to him, December 8, 1983.

1984, of course, was not a gloomy Prediction of Things To Come; it was Orwell's warning of the horrors of totalitarianism, particularly of the Soviet variety. But as a rough prediction of the destiny of a communist society it still has much to recommend it. Although it has never again sunk to the depths of the deranged coercion of the Stalin period, with innocent men confessing in show trials to crimes they had never committed, the nature of the Soviet state has not changed fundamentally. After all these decades, and all these Five Year Plans, and all of Khrushchev's promises to "overtake" the West economically in 20 years, it still remains a society of scarcity. Despite the hopes pinned to "the Thaw" and "Détente" and the optimists who thought that increased contact with the West would "liberalize" the Soviet system, it has *not* been liberalized. The Soviet state offers virtually none of the freedoms promised in its own Constitution but continues to rule by repression. People still do not speak freely and sincerely to anyone outside a circle of the most trusted friends—if even then. Class stratifications exist, despite vigorous official protests to the contrary, with what Orwell called the "Inner Party" now often referred to as the "Red Bourgeoisie" or even the "Red Aristocracy." Defectors still move from East to West, and not vice versa. No one, as Senator Moynihan says, "swims through shark infested waters to reach the shores of East Germany."

And yet Orwell, if we take his work as even a nightmare projection of a communist society, was off the mark on two major points: (1) the ability of a totalitarian state to obliterate memory ("He who controls the past controls the future; he who controls the present controls the past"); and (2) his famous "doublethink."

One of the spectacular findings of Antonov-Ovseyenko, the Soviet dissident who had access to some of the unpublished findings of Khrushchev's commission investigating the crimes of Stalin, was that—after 20 years of saturation state propaganda claiming that Kirov had been assassinated by Trotskyite agents, which triggered the Great Purge—some of the commission members were told in Leningrad with a smile that, why, "everyone in Leningrad" knew that Kirov had been killed by Stalin. Memory had not been destroyed. The people knew. In Poland, where resistance to official communist mythology has been strengthened by powerful nationalist hatred of Russia, official myths have had even less impact. I have never met a Pole, in Poland, who did not know the true circumstances of the 1944 Warsaw Rising by the anticommunist Home Army, when Soviet forces waited with folded arms on the other side of the Vistula for the Germans to put down the revolt and slaughter a quarter of a million Poles. Driving by the Vistula some years before Solidarity, a Pole pointed across the river

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Avoiding Questions

John W. Aldridge: *The American Novel and the Way We Live Now;* Oxford University Press; New York.

John Gardner: *On Becoming a Novelist;* Harper & Row; New York.

by Stephen L. Tanner

The American Novel and the Way We Live Now is a gem, one of those concise little books that coruscate with gleaming wisdom and flashes of insight. As the title suggests, it is a study of certain features of the contemporary American novel, a commentary on prominent aspects of contemporary life, and an exposition of the connection between the two. This connection, as his earlier books demonstrate *(After the Lost Generation, In Search of Heresy, Time to Murder and Create,* and *The Devil in the Fire),* has always fascinated Aldridge, and he frankly acknowledges his, now unfashionable, tendency to treat literature in its social and historical context. He insists that no matter how remote and tangential the relation between fiction and actual life might appear, we must remember that life is where the novel always begins. In the preface to *After the Lost Generation* (1951), he said, "One cannot speak of fiction without sooner or later speaking of values." He hasn't changed his mind about this.

A principal strength of this latest book is the combination of penetrating generalizations about contemporary American fiction and life and perceptive analyses of specific novels. Aldridge has a gift for probing a novelist's methods and exposing the essential substance—or lack of it—in his or her vision. He is not taken in by techniques that are superficially impressive or persuasive yet mask real deficiencies. He is skilled in analyzing an author's strategies (conscious and unconscious) and in evaluating what they amount to. He is particularly good at recognizing when a novelist loses touch with the genuine nature and value of human experience. And he employs the same kind of critical acumen in his analysis of American society and evaluation of American life.

It is this element of evaluation—value judgments—that makes the book engaging. This is not to say that his judgments will find wide acceptance. Indeed, liberal intellectuals will find him disquieting. He criticizes their orthodoxies. He bumps against their sore spots and calls attention to the holes in their socks, the tears in their underwear. Evaluation is now quite out of vogue in literary discourse. Describing parallels or providing ingenious subjective interpretation is more customary. If a "text" exists, it is perforce worthy of elaborate interpretation. To ask whether it was worth the effort of creation or reading is considered heretical or simply beside the point. Aldridge asks such questions here, as he has with consistency during the past three decades; his key ideas and attitudes have remained constant. But because critical fashion has turned away from social, historical, and moral context, his judicial approach appears increasingly novel; for those who lament the disappearance of rigorous evaluation in the discussion of books, it is refreshing and bracing.

In a way, as the preface hints, Aldridge has turned the tables on recent criticism. He welcomes the current tendency toward the subjective and impressionistic and appropriates the license it provides to be "personal and provisional and conjectural and even crotchety and ironical" in expressing the very value judgments much recent criticism deprecates.

His principal subject is "the various ways in which self-preoccupation resulting from the loss of a sense of personal connection with the environment has become a dominant subject matter in our contemporary fiction." He explores the question of how the assumption that only the self is worthy of regard and consideration in fiction has achieved such authority, and he finds the answers in recent patterns of American life. His essential method is to discover the counterproductive or ironic consequences of various tendencies in contemporary life and fiction.

In treating female writers, for example, he points out that the alleged journey toward liberation depicted in their books results in a freedom that becomes as oppressive a tyranny as the tyrannies left behind. The female character who accepts the programmatic feminist conception of what constitutes self-liberation:

> becomes aware (or we, in reading her story, become aware) that she is trying to *will* her life to move in supposedly liberating directions, while her emotions remain refractory and unsatisfied. Thus, finally, her struggle for freedom is balked not only by the fact that the struggle has become itself a bondage but by the more formidable fact that in trying to find herself she can find nothing to which she is willing to give herself and in the giving achieve the meaning of her freedom.

He perceives the same ironic consequences in the treatment of adultery. Alison Lurie, for example, depends heavily on sexual intrigue for dramatic con-

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flict in her fiction, but, according to Aldridge, there are insufficient moral prohibitions in the society she describes; consequently, her treatment of adultery is trivialized and suffers from "arbitrariness and inconsequence."

The preoccupation with the process of narration can be similarly counterproductive. He remarks that John Barth, in *Lost in the Funhouse,* "emerges as the author so obsessively conscious of the possible ways of presenting his narrative that finally all possibilities are sabotaged and the very idea of narrative becomes unthinkable." Aldridge notes the same unintended consequences in the mandatory egalitarianism now prevailing among us, which he says has "short-circuited" whole areas of the national psyche, depleted its vital force and resulted in "rampant mediocrity." Likewise, psychiatry, while intended as a healing force, has actually reduced our sense of "the concrete dramatic relation existing between the self and the environment" and inhibited our ability to deal with experience simply by confronting and coping with it. In one area of American society and fiction after another, Aldridge probes beneath the surface, sees connections and recognizes implications and contradictions. His critiques of television and youth culture are particularly telling.

One of his major arguments is that the classic modernist view ("the dislocated self no longer sustained by the social structure and idealistic assumptions of the past, trapped in a demythologized and therefore demoralized present, dying a little more each day as the forces of entropy deepen and accelerate throughout the world") has become a cliché and consequently lost much of its meaning. It no longer serves an adversary function. Many contemporary writers have adopted this vision a priori, uncritically, without measuring it against life as actually lived. As a result, we now suffer from "a surfeit of negation and an apparent failure of understanding of just what values have been negated, what were the illusions we once mistook for truth, and what, if any, remain to be exposed." Official conventions of negative discourse, such as black humor, have become institutionalized. They are available, like processed foods in a supermarket, to any artist or social commentator "in need of a jar of pickled *Angst* or instant Doom, and these ingredients had better be abundantly present in any work with pretensions to being taken seriously as an honest statement about the larger unrealities of our time." As these conventions have established themselves, "the conventions of verisimilitude and sanity have been nullified."

"Mr. Aldridge's judgments are uncommonly harsh."
—*New York Times Book Review*

Aldridge concludes by asserting that the prevailing orthodoxy of unexamined negativism leaves much of the proper work of the imagination yet to be done, and he encourages novelists "to become genuinely and radically subversive once again, to resume the traditional function of examining with the clear eye of sanity whatever are the shams and delusions of the prevailing culture, and, by so doing, to restore some measure of wisdom, wonder, and even delight to the somber passage of our history through time."

John Gardner completed *On Becoming a Novelist* just a few weeks before his death in September 1982, at age 49, in a motorcycle accident. He had published 10 volumes of criticism, five books for children, two works of poetry, two collections of short stories, and eight novels. *On Becoming a Novelist* is the product both of this publishing experience and of his years as a teacher of creative writing. It is directed to the serious beginning novelist who wants not just to be published but to produce fine writing and be read. Gardner's objective is "to deal with, and if possible get rid of, the beginning novelist's worries."

The first chapter, comprising half the book, treats the question: Do I have what it takes? What it takes, according to Gardner, is verbal sensitivity, an accurate and nonderivative eye, a storyteller's intelligence, and an almost demonic compulsiveness. The following chapters treat the questions: How should I educate myself? and Can I make a living from writing novels? The advice, often expressed in personal experience, is generally wise, practical, and encouraging, treating everything from overcoming writer's block to dealing with agents.

Gardner is not one of the novelists treated in Aldridge's book. He doesn't fit the categories examined there. In many ways he and Aldridge are on the same wavelength. Like Aldridge, he believed, as he told an audience at the Bread Loaf Conference, that the postmodernists are wrong "because they examine the microscope that looks at life, not life itself." Like Aldridge, he warns the writer against expressing a despair or nihilism that he does not genuinely feel. Both men display a marked preference for mimetic fiction and a suspicion of experimental fiction or what Robert Scholes has called "fabulation," an antirealism that attempts to be self-contained. Both are preoccupied with the expression of values in fiction. Descriptively speaking, says Gardner in *On Becoming a Novelist,* "the fiction that lasts tends to be 'moral,' that is, it works with a minimum of cynical manipulation and it tends to reach affirmations favorable rather than opposed to life." One of his students at last year's Bread Loaf Conference reported his saying that "affirmative fiction will heal us, will save us from ourselves, from despair. If fiction is immoral, then it is insignificant, whatever the dazzle of its expression or the appeal of its theory. Literature as 'play,' regardless of the level of the skill of play, is unworthy of serious interest and attention of serious readers."

But peculiarly enough, at about the same time he was saying such things, a *Washington Post* feature quoted him as saying he was ashamed to have published *On Moral Fiction* (1978), that it was

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the work of an undisciplined mind, that he didn't really believe what he had written. Instead of inspiring his fellow writers, he had alienated them, and he felt uncomfortable with the way Moral Majority thinkers had taken him up. The critical writing and public lectures of his last years manifest a contradictory pattern of such assertion and retreat.

Perhaps this situation is evidence of how powerful is the influence of the conventions in contemporary life and literature examined in *The American Novel and the Way We Live Now.* Gardner seems to be a case of a writer who by background and temperament was disposed toward a mimetic fiction of moral affirmation, but who in the face of contrary attitudes and fashions in contemporary thought and fiction vacillated. *On Moral Fiction,* which asserts that moral affirmation is the most fundamental artistic value and that true art treats ideals, affirming and clarifying the Good, the True, and the Beautiful, was undoubtedly written out of considerable conviction; but it may also have been partly motivated by the desire to startle a literary establishment that had separated itself so far from a moral conception of fiction. The book naturally provoked controversy, which apparently Gardner's commitment was unable to withstand. This waffling is understandable in view of the fact that his is a voice crying in the wilderness, without support from the influential centers of literary opinion. His case is instructive and lends credence to Aldridge's portrayal of the pervasiveness of negative orthodoxies in contemporary fiction. □

The Diaphanous Bud

Umberto Eco: *The Name of the Rose;* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.

***Italian Renaissance Tales;* Selected by Janet Levarie Smarr; Solaris Press; Rochester, MI.**

by Gary S. Vasilash

There are innumerable ways to approach *The Name of the Rose.* Its author, Umberto Eco, is an Italian, a professor of semiotics at the University of Bologna. The book is a best-seller in Italy, France, Germany, and here; it has received awards including the Premio Strega, the Premio Viareggio, and the Prix Medicis. The book, translated into English by William Weaver, appeared in the U.S. last June, and before the summer was out, some 130,000 hardcover copies were in print and the paperback rights were sold to Warner Books for $550,000, which is reportedly the largest paperback sale for a translation. Clearly, *The Name of the Rose* is a curious cultural phenomenon. What are hundreds of thousands of people finding of interest in a text (yes, *text*) written by a man who is best known in circles where "works in movement" and other arcane formulations are inscripted in pages of scholarly journals and university press books? Has Mr. Eco sold his credentials for a mess of *cappuccino* at Elaine's? The answer to the second question is, unequivocally, *no. The Name of the Rose* can be carried around at Johns Hopkins and Yale without a smidgen of embarrassment. Mr. Eco is not a Neapolitan Sidney Sheldon. *The Name of the Rose* is a serious work of literature. So what is it doing on subways, held by people who aren't on their way to the New York Institute for the Humanities? That, a variation on the first question (which some semiotician would note is an example of a paradigmatic relationship), cannot be answered simply, nor can it be answered finally. Only tentative thrusts can be made at it. These thrusts are as numerous as the approaches that can be taken on the way to an understanding of the text.

The permeability of *The Name of the Rose* is perhaps best understood through Mr. Eco's "The Poetics of the Open Work," which appears in *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Indiana University Press: Bloomington, 1979). In it, Mr. Eco says, "the form of the work of art gains its aesthetic validity precisely in proportion to the number of different perspectives from which it can be viewed and understood." Mr. Eco points out that an author creates a work with a specific end in mind. Certainly, the writer knows what he himself is trying to say. However, the recipients of the finished text are different from the author (e.g., culturally, intellectually), which is obvious. But while that may be so, what is often ignored is the different perspectives that they have. And, similarly, readers in Bologna of *The Name of the Rose* in Italian will have a different sight than this reader in Rockford. While the observation about validity and numerous perspectives might lead one to think that a dictionary would have the best form, that is not the case, as Mr. Eco explains that a work of art "is a complete and *closed* form in its uniqueness as a balanced organic whole, while at the same time constituting an *open* product on account of its susceptibility to countless different interpretations which do not impinge on its unadulterable specificity." Mr. Eco is not promoting chaos. He is stating that there are various interpretations that can be brought to bear on a form that the author creates. He notes, for example, that in the Middle Ages (which is the setting of *The Name of the Rose*), the theory of allegory that was developed said that Scripture ("and eventually poetry, figurative arts") could be read literally, morally, allegorically, and anagogically. Given that state, a work can be considered, at least partially, "open":

> The reader of the text knows that every sentence and every trope is 'open' to a

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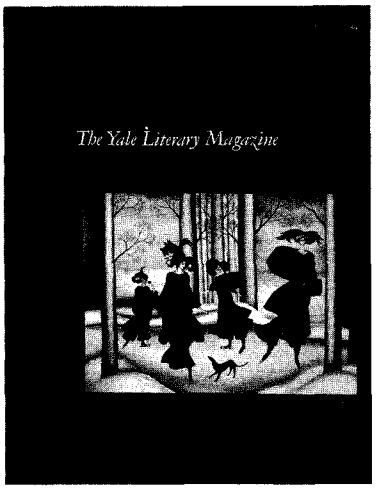

When *The Yale Literary Magazine* was founded, Beethoven was completing the *Missa Solemnis*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria* appeared, and Emerson began his *Journal*. The names of a few authors we have published since then — Rudyard Kipling, Sinclair Lewis, Stephen Vincent Benét, Thornton Wilder, John Dos Passos — show that some of our judgments have been quite timely.

Today, as ever, it is unique talent, not just prominent names, that we seek. When we publish Lewis H. Lapham, or E. H. Gombrich, it is not because one is the editor of *Harper's* and the other a highbrow "name"; what they contribute to our pages is unique, and that is the reason for their inclusion. The same is true of all our authors.

The Yale Literary Magazine still stands alone.

Our magazine is not published fortnightly on newsprint, to extol this week's writers, expound on last week's thinkers, and crumble to dust a week thereafter. The paper we print on permits the most accurate color reproduction of any magazine in the world and is guaranteed to endure for centuries. And we seek to publish and reproduce what will last at least as long.

But *The Yale Literary Magazine* is now under attack.

So boldly, so uncomprisingly have our authors spoken on issues of culture and politics that the academic tastemakers of the university in whose shadow the magazine was born have sought to suppress it as a source of intellectual dissent. Their actions, as George Will remarked in a recent **60 Minutes** broadcast dealing with the controversy, have cast doubt on "the integrity of a major American university," and compelled the magazine to defend its freedom in court.

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*Lewis H. Lapham

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> multiplicity of meanings which he must hunt for and find. Indeed, according to how he feels at one particular moment, the reader might choose a possible interpretative key which strikes him as exemplary of this spiritual state.

From the standpoint of semiotics, it can be said that the reader in the Middle Ages, who was undoubtedly a member of the clergy, as the characters in *The Name of the Rose* are, worked with a huge number of signifiers and, ultimately, one signified: God. No matter which key he selected, the reader would end at God. *The Name of the Rose* is, in effect, written by a monk who lived during the 14th century. If one were to receive that manuscript from the hands of Adso, then that person would undoubtedly read the text as a gloss on the glory of God. But in today's world, wherein the Church is just one of many forms of belief, there is truly a "multiplicity of meanings" available in any given work of art. In the case of *The Name of the Rose,* there is almost an exponential increase in the number of meanings, as Mr. Eco undoubtedly worked to provide various perspectives.

One approach that some postmodern novelists employ to provide what they *think* is a multiplicity of meanings is to throw away all conventional literary forms, such as point of view and rudimentary rules of syntax. The pages are endless blocks of type or unmonolithic remarks that cannot even be described as being gnostic. While I will agree that there exists no final Word on what a novel should or should not be and that valid arguments can be made for the legitimacy of these bizarre productions (after all, if Richardson set the standard, then *Tristram Shandy* would be nothing more than a curious relic), it seems to me that such texts are usually unsatisfying because they are either overdetermined or too elusive. While the fault may lie in the reader and not in the text, my inability to find the authors' "unadulterable specificity" because of those conditions—which are both matters, essentially, of form—causes the texts to be seen from no perspective.

Mr. Eco takes the opposite tack and submits himself to a very strict formal arrangement in *The Name of the Rose,* one that is delineated in Ms. Smarr's *Italian Renaissance Tales,* a fascinating collection of, mainly, post-Boccaccio tales and novellas, for which she provides a valuable introduction. (*The Decameron* appeared 1348-1353; *The Name of the Rose* is set in November 1327, though it was "written" in the 1380's or 1390's.) One characteristic that most of the pieces that she presents and which *The Name of the Rose* shares is the use of the narrative frame. The frame goes back to ancient times (e.g., Apuleius' *Golden Ass*), but Boccaccio was most influential in its widespread reemployment. Boccaccio frames *The Decameron* with days: 10 people tell tales during two weeks' time. Mr. Eco also uses days, one week. Mr. Eco constructs a still finer grid: the days are divided into the liturgical hours (i.e., Matins, Lauds, Prime, Terce, Sext, Nones, Vespers, Compline). As mentioned, Boccaccio used 10 narrators; in *The Name of the Rose,* to ignore the prefatory material for the moment, there is just one. This seems to indicate an influence on Mr. Eco by Matteo Bandello (1485-c. 1561) who, Ms. Smarr says, "developed a longer, more elaborate narrative, often following the development of a character through many years and demonstrating in some cases a realism of observation and a depth of psychological interest unparalleled since Boccaccio." *The Name of the Rose* is a long narrative by any standards, 502 pages in length, and is packed full of details that contribute to physical and psychological realism. Although Mr. Eco's narrator could not have been influenced by Bandello, Mr. Eco could have been, so from the standpoint of hermeneutics, Bandello can be considered with regard

In the forthcoming issue of *Chronicles of Culture:*

Arts & Power

Politics and art differ in kind. The political focuses on and ends with society; art begins where politics ends and addresses the essential dimension of our personal lives. Thus, while politicians strive to satisfy material wants and needs, the artist speaks to our spirituality; while politicians praise our equality at the ballot box, the artist glorifies our human equality; while politicians criticize the policies of previous administrations, the artist examines the way we live on a daily basis. Indeed, the real reason that art is conservative is that it attempts to conserve those values that constant preoccupation with politics has caused us to forget."

—from "Transcendence of Mere Opinion" by John Moeller

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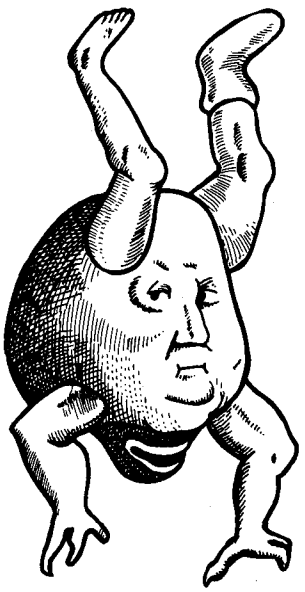
to Mr. Eco's use of the forms of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance.

Mr. Eco's narrator, Adso, is a participant in the events that he describes, which is another characteristic of the early Italian tales and novellas. About the authors of these works Ms. Smarr notes, "They seem to be aware of freezing onto paper the previously variable flow of narration and to be trying to capture in this translation from one medium to another some of the original feeling of fluidity." Throughout *The Name of the Rose* there are instances when Adso is at a loss for words and when he starts to make a digression that would be natural for an oral telling, but which he realizes subverts the written linearity that he is trying to achieve. The modern novel *is*, of course, the progeny of the novella. Ms. Smarr points out that there are two facets to the novella: Fiction, unreal, perhaps fabulous tales is one aspect. Ms. Smarr says that *novella* also "meant 'news' and as such could be used to describe . . . recent events." *The Name of the Rose* is replete with reports about the events that took place in the early 14th century with regard to the animosity that existed between Pope John XXII and the Franciscans; for a contemporary of Adso's, the novel would be a chronicle of current events.

A move from the aspects of form to content also shows that *The Name of the Rose* is a child of the earlier works (in a genealogical sense, that is). Ms. Smarr says, "Renaissance novellas are not only full of illicit love affairs and clerical scandals, they show an immense interest in scatological humor and pranksterism." Foremost in *The Name of the Rose* are clerical scandals. It is a tale of six deaths —murders, perhaps—that occur in a monastery. Illicit love affairs, it seems, are a motive. The scatology isn't necessarily funny, but it is there. Only pranksterism seems absent, unless one defines a prankster as one who upsets the established order, in which case the criminal is a notorious prankster, as the consequences of his actions certainly destroy the order.

In *Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy* (Johns Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1981), Geoffrey H. Hartman writes, "There is, it seems, no knowledge except in the form of a text—of *écriture*—and that is devious and dissolving, very unabsolute, as it leads always to other texts and further writings." Or, as one of Mr. Eco's characters puts it, "Often books speak of other books," which causes another to think: "it is as if they spoke among themselves." If *The Name of the Rose* is taken up and even a partial effort is made to deconstruct it, to identify the fragments and the influences that pervade it, then my act of writing would be endless: not only would it be necessary to tag those objects which are Mr. Eco's, but, as it is an open work, those that are my own. Already I have cited Boccaccio and Bandello. Perhaps Sacchetti, Sercambi, Salerno, and many others could be added. But let me try to spot the beams and leave the motes.

The Name of the Rose is a detective story. Crimes are committed and/or bodies are discovered in such a way that the agent seems to be using the Apocalypse as a guide. Think of Agatha Christie. Although the monastery is in Italy, the



"detective" is an Englishman, a very rational man, a student of Roger Bacon ("It is the intention of philosophy to work out the natures and properties of things") and a friend of William of Occam. The detective is assisted by an amanuensis who later writes the events down. The detective's name is William of Baskerville. Think of Conan Doyle. While it might seem outrageous to bring Christie and Doyle to bear on the work, it isn't necessarily so: chapter six of *The Role of the Reader* is entitled "Narrative Structures in [Ian] Fleming." Various accidents that bring illumination to the narrator bring Robert Louis Stevenson to mind. Very copious descriptions of the layout of the environment seem to mark the influence of Robbe-Grillet.

Finally, there is a writer who looms in and above the text of *The Name of the Rose,* just as he does in and above postmodern literature. First, clues. Benedictine monasteries in the Middle Ages were centers of knowledge; they contained books and manuscripts that the monks laboriously copied and illuminated. The monastery in question in *The Name of the Rose* has a massive library. About it and the way that it is run, the abbot says:

> 'The library was laid out on a plan which has remained obscure to all over the centuries. . . . Only the librarian has received the secret, from the librarian who preceded him, and he communicates it, while still alive, to the assistant librarian, so that death will not take him by surprise and rob the community of that knowledge. And the secret seals the lips of both men. Only the librarian has, in addition to that knowledge, the right to move through the labyrinth of the books, he alone knows where to find them and where to replace them, he alone is responsible for their safekeeping.'

Outside of Adso's frame, but within the confines of the covers of *The Name of the Rose,* there is an introduction, or explanation, by someone who can be designated Mr. Echo. He describes, with meticulous detail, how he came upon a 19th-century edition of a book that was

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an annotated version of a 14th-century manuscript that had been discovered in the 18th century. Mr. Echo says that he read the book and then "completed a translation using some of those large notebooks from the Papeterie Joseph Gilbert in which it is so pleasant to write if you use a felt-tip pen." Mr. Echo tried to authenticate the book and the manuscript, but he had great difficulty. Indeed, it seemed impossible, and Mr. Echo began to think that there exist "visions of books as yet unwritten." But in Buenos Aires he chanced upon *On the Use of Mirrors in the Game of Chess,* which includes quotations from Adso's manuscript.

Clearly, Mr. Eco, in the foregoing, is referring to two of the more influential stories of this century: "The Library of Babel" and "Tlon, Uqbar, Orbis Tertius." He goes further to make a point about the influence of Jorge Luis Borges on contemporary literature and the approaches taken to it. A central character is an old blind man. Mr. Borges is 84 and unsighted. That character's name is Jorge of Burgos; only a little anagrammatic figuring is needed there. Mr. Borges isn't used gratuitously, *The Name of the Rose* isn't a simple roman à clef; Mr. Eco seems to use him to make a point about literature and philosophy, about learning and knowing—and about their consequences.

However, no matter how pat the evidence may seem, my conclusions may be incorrect with regard to the "unadulterable specificity" of the text, as they are nothing more than forms selected on the basis of my reading of mysteries, Mr. Borges's writings, Ms. Smarr's book, various other works, and *The Name of the Rose.* Still, even if those conclusions are wrong, the effort involved in reaching them is worth the trouble. Indeed, it would be impossible to read the book seriously and not make the effort: words are not transparent; the discourse is there to be interpreted. Or, as Mr. Eco succinctly puts it in *The Name of the Rose,* "Books are not made to be believed, but to be subjected to inquiry." What is remarkable about *The Name of the Rose* is that it is a book that can sustain the onslaughts of critical inquiry while still existing as a work that can be read and appreciated by the common reader: "the form of the work of art gains its aesthetic validity precisely in proportion to the number of different perspectives from which it can be viewed and understood." This rose is more than a flower. □

Catastrophic Chic

Bernard J. O'Keefe: *Nuclear Hostages;* Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

Michael Mandelbaum: *The Nuclear Future;* Cornell University Press; Ithaca, NY.

by William R. Hawkins

The wave of articles and books concerning nuclear-weapons policy has reached flood stage since 1981 in the wake of the protests launched by the born-again peace movement. The timing of this effort provokes suspicion. It is hard to take seriously as pacifists those figures who mix their opposition to American military policy with support for revolutionary warfare and terrorism in Central America, the Middle East, and Africa. The new disarmament movement, though claiming to oppose both superpowers, arose in response to the Reagan Administration and its rearmament plans and not in response to the Soviet unilateral arms expansion of the 1970's, which included large-scale deployment of first-strike weapons. Since most of the movement organizers are on the left, it is no surprise that they are more hostile to democratic-capitalist powers than toward the totalitarian-socialist powers, with which they bear an ideological affinity. Even for those movement followers who are motivated more by fear than by reason, it should be clear that the only practical political outcome of the peace movement will be to restrain American policy and encourage Soviet aggression.

The boom in "nuclear writing" has a vast host of authors jumping on the bandwagon. These two books are examples of the trend. Both are lightweight, easy reading due to their authors' shallow thinking. *Nuclear Hostages* is primarily the reminiscences of a minor figure involved in the early days of atomic development interspersed with phrases deemed "relevant" to the current fad of nuclear dread. Often a single sentence will be inserted between two paragraphs, out of context but invoking catastrophic language. The last chapter skims over 20 years of developments. Its purpose seems to be merely to provide a forum for the author's confused opinions about current policy and to justify the book's title. *Nuclear Future* is a slim volume that seems designed for use as a supplement in an introductory course in international relations. Its lack of depth is a reminder of the low level of thought which has become common and expected (thus perpetuated) at the undergraduate level. It attempts to cover contending theories of strategy, but behind this surface objectivity are the standard liberal conclusions.

Bernard O'Keefe earned a degree in engineering in 1941, and as a Navy ensign was assigned to Los Alamos to work on timing devices for the first atomic bombs. In the 1950's he worked on instruments to measure the effects of atomic tests. He now heads a high-tech company and is chairman of the National Association of Manufacturers. His retelling of the story of how nuclear science progressed is interesting, but insufficiently detailed to add anything new to available information. Most people who pick up this book will do so because it is marketed as the views of an expert on nuclear strategy. They will be disap-

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pointed, for it is apparent that once O'Keefe departs from purely technical points or personal experiences, he exhausts his expertise. This is a problem with many scientists. They are accorded wide attention because of their ability to perform laboratory feats that, to the layman, border on magic, but their political and strategic acumen is often embarrassingly naive. One gets the impression that O'Keefe wrote his book in a hurry without much thought given to the implications of his opinions on the international balance of power.

His position is that nuclear weapons are too horrible to be used under any circumstances. O'Keefe contends that it may have been a good thing for the U.S. to develop atomic weapons first, before Germany or the U.S.S.R. did so, but that the arms race since World War II has been a mistake. He regrets that the Truman Administration moved ahead with a crash program to build an H-bomb in 1950. O'Keefe feels that "once again the opportunity to alter the course to catastrophe was lost." He was in agreement with the General Advisory Committee of scientists under Robert Oppenheimer which concluded unanimously that no crash program should be undertaken lest it prove to be irreversible. However, he concedes that no realistic alternative was possible after the Soviets exploded an H-bomb in 1949. The Korean War, which broke out six months after Truman's decision, only served to confirm the fear of communist aggressive intent.

O'Keefe opposes all present attempts to improve the American arsenal. He calls the neutron bomb "the most impractical weapon yet conceived" because it would only provoke Soviet retaliation if used, thus negating any attempt to limit damage. However, NATO strategy is based on the use of tactical nuclear weapons to redress its inferiority in conventional forces. The choice is either to deploy the neutron warhead, which limits collateral damage, or to rely on older, more destructive weapons. The Soviets do not seem to draw a line between conventional and nuclear battlefield weapons as NATO does, so a war in Europe would probably be nuclear from the start. NATO's choice of weapons should be made on grounds of effectiveness against the Soviets; on those terms, the neutron warhead makes considerable sense.

This does not mean that NATO can ignore the weakness of its conventional forces. Whether the battle for Europe is nuclear or nonnuclear, Soviet superiority on the ground will be decisive. The smaller number of NATO combat units mean a smaller number of targets that the Soviets need to destroy. It is also possible that escalation to nuclear weapons, rather than redressing the imbalance, might exacerbate it, as whatever qualitative edge NATO armies possess would be lost under nuclear bombardment. O'Keefe ignores this entire issue. He also ignores the Soviet SS-20, managing to discuss the deployment of U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles to Europe without a single reference to the Soviet arsenal. It may be that he does not even know about the SS-20, for he bases his opposition to American deployment on the grounds that *both* superpowers currently have obsolete weapons. This provides an opportunity to free Europe of nuclear weapons because each power can remove its obsolete weapons and refuse to replace them. The obvious flaw in this reasoning is that the Soviet SS-20 is a very advanced weapon that has already been deployed to replace older systems. The

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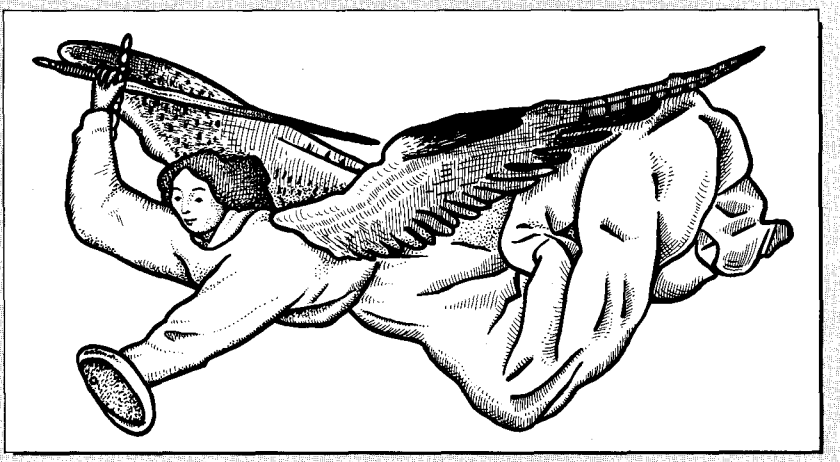

The New Higher Criticism

Among all those courageous spirits who forsook religious and traditional norms in favor of the beatific self-fulfillment promised by the sexual revolution, the names of William Masters and Virginia Johnson have long been invoked with deep reverence. As one sexologist in New York City explained: "Masters was the prototypical godlike figure that people hesitated to challenge." But now iconoclasts are blasphemously mutilating the blessed images of Masters and his collaborator. After some psychologists accused the pair of using deceptive data in their work, the ensuing debate left even true believers shaken. "The field can no longer look with certainty at the bible," confided a troubled sexologist to a *Time* reporter. The *Time* correspondent hastened to clarify: "That bible is, of course, Masters and Johnson's *Human Sexual Inadequacy.*" Of course. □

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opportunity O'Keefe postulates is not there; the need for the U.S. to redress the imbalance is.

Probably his most naive position is on international terrorism. He wants strong antiterrorist measures because he fears that terrorism may escalate to the nuclear level and might even trigger a nuclear war through overreaction. This is fine, albeit overdrawn. His problem is in believing that the Soviets are likely partners in an antiterrorist campaign. He reasons that the Soviets face the threat of terrorism themselves growing out of their dissident movement, and fails to note that the international terrorist network that plagues Western interests is largely the creation of the Soviets and their proxies. Terrorism is an arm of Soviet policy they will not dismantle.

The terrorism issue also provides a contradiction in that O'Keefe is willing to restrict civil liberties to stop terrorism today, but he protests the security measures he had to endure at Los Alamos. He discusses the Fuchs-Gold-Rosenberg espionage case and considers them guilty: "Fuchs passed on virtually everything there was to be known at Los Alamos." Yet his response to learning that the project had been infiltrated was to wonder "why weren't the security barriers eased a little now that they had been breached? . . . Probably just the innate secretiveness of security people, the refusal to admit error." What sort of logic is this? It is just one example of the contradictions and confusion which run through this book, leaving the reader frustrated.

Michael Mandelbaum, a Fellow of the Council on Foreign Relations, presents a better-grounded discussion. He makes some valid points: that the extremes of Armageddon and disarmament are both unlikely, that no political goal is worth the price of a full nuclear exchange aimed at cities. However, the political costs of disarmament in an environment of continued U.S.-Soviet rivalry are also too high. Nuclear technology cannot be forgotten and force, or the threat of it, does play a major role in international affairs. For more than a century, nationalism and science have combined to produce arms races; the nuclear dilemma is only the most recent example. Only under a world government might disarmament be possible, but the trends are all toward increasing global anarchy, not unity. Attempts to limit arms races by negotiation have not been very significant, Mandelbaum admits:

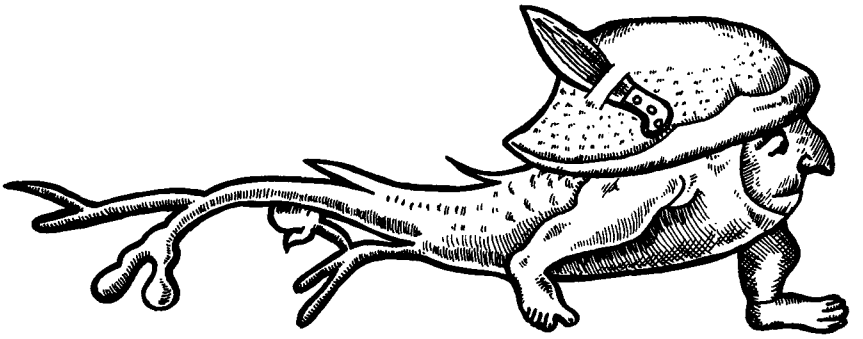
> Political disputes cause war. Arms control agreements do not address them. . . . At the heart of the Soviet-American conflict lie differences about the political organization of Europe and indeed the world. These are issues about which, on the whole, formal agreements are not possible.

He also concedes that arms buildups do not cause war:

> There is no necessary connection between large forces and a high danger of war. The reverse may be true. . . . A pre-emptive strike would be seen to be more feasible against a few weapons than against a great many.

Mandelbaum does not think that the peace movement will have a major effect on policy. However, his liberal leanings lead him to handle the peace movement gently. He mentions the professional and religious wings of the movement; the Physicians for Social Responsibility, the National Council of Churches, and the Catholic bishops are the only groups mentioned by name. He also compares the peace movement with the organized effort to require a balanced budget by constitutional amendment. Both groups are rooted in distrust of government and a desire to influence policy by democratic means removed from the "priesthood" of experts. This is a rather disingenuous way to distort both right and left by linking them. He blames current distrust of nuclear policy on the Reagan Administration's rejection of SALT II and on the new arms program. This overlooks the fact that SALT II was dead before Reagan was elected and that Reagan's views on defense were well known and contributed heavily to his election. The defense consensus *has* eroded since 1981, but that is partially the fault of the Administration's failure to confront its critics and make a strong enough case for military strength. There have been too many changes in policy at START, on the MX, and in announced strategy which seems aimed at appeasing the peace movement. The peaceniks have not been quieted, but the Administration has undermined its own position in the public mind by talking arms control rather than national security.

Mandelbaum ends up adopting some of the positions of the peace movement. He opposes the deployment of new weapons, which amounts to a unilateral freeze. He sees no threat from the U.S.S.R. First-strike weapons would normally indicate aggressive intent, and he acknowledges that the Soviets view nuclear war differently than does the U.S. But he still concludes that "what appears aggressive to Americans is evidently compatible, in Soviet eyes, with defensive intentions." Why? Because he believes that the Soviets have defensive intent, therefore their ac-



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tions must be within that framework. If observed behavior does not fit theory, ignore the observations.

He does not see any chance for a Soviet first strike. He accepts the notion that the U.S. and U.S.S.R. are at parity in weapons. He does not cite figures, which would undermine his complacency. The Soviets have a first-strike force of 607 MIRV'd ICBM's with 4,400 warheads capable of knocking out hardened sites. They have an additional 718 ICBM's and 950 submarine-launched missiles with single warheads for use against cities. Their first-strike force is twice the size needed to destroy the 1,054 U.S. silos (two warheads per silo is deemed sufficient). Those bombers not caught on the ground will stand little chance against the massive Soviet air-defense network. That only leaves U.S. submarines, now only 33 in number, one-third to one-half of which are in port and thus vulnerable at any given time. Submarine missiles are too small for use against anything but cities, thus inviting a massive Soviet assault on the American population if Soviet cities are hit in retaliation for a first strike against military targets. The Soviets thus possess escalation dominance. Even without an attack, Soviet superiority could block American actions and act as an umbrella for aggression by conventional means.

There are three ways to provide security: preemptive strike, active defense, and deterrence. Mandelbaum dismisses out of hand preemption or any nuclear first use. Active protection is appealing, but he does not think it is feasible. He holds the position that a defense against attack would have to be "perfect" or it is a waste of money. This is nonsense. Avoiding almost any amount of nuclear damage would pay for quite a large defense force. The new technology in lasers and particle beams make a defense easier and cheaper. Mandelbaum mistakenly argues that the ABM Treaty was signed because everyone knew defense was impossible. Actually, the Soviets pushed for the treaty because they were behind in ABM technology. The U.S. signed out of a naive belief that it would promote arms control in general and bolster détente. This proved wrong on both counts. The Soviets have pushed ahead with both ABM missiles and energy weapons. The reintroduction of the idea of defense by the Reagan Administration is the most important strategic event of the decade.

Like O'Keefe, Mandelbaum ends up falling back on the pure-deterrence theory of mutual assured destruction (MAD). However, MAD is a negation of thought and an exercise in irresponsibility. Either there is no war to think about because of successful deterrence or there is Armageddon, which leaves nothing to think about. Mandelbaum starts out inveighing against extremes, yet offers only extremes. The idea behind MAD, that we should not devise ways to protect ourselves or seek victory over our enemies should war come, is totally at odds with both history and common sense. In strategic thought, the Soviets are the traditionalists and the Americans are the revolutionaries. The Soviets have been diligently attempting to find a way out of the Armageddon trap which will still allow them to pursue an expansionist foreign policy. They ask: What if deterrence fails? An answer couched in terms of mutual suicide they find to be unacceptable, so they build weapons and formulate plans to fight and win a nuclear war. There was a hope that the Reagan Administration would implement a policy of preparing for the risks of war, but opposition from both liberals and radicals has derailed the Administration, leaving its weapons program without a strategic foundation. In this debate, "respectable" liberals like O'Keefe and Mandelbaum are more dangerous than any number of street demonstrators. □

Diplomacy and Fatuity

Zbigniew Brzezinski: *Power and Principle: Memoirs of the National Security Adviser 1977-1981;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

by John Caiazza

Lately our national leaders seem to have taken it into their heads that their first obligation upon taking office is to get ready to write their memoirs once they leave it. We've had Nixon's and Johnson's, Kissinger's massive volumes, and now Vance's and Brzezinski's. (Jimmy Carter reportedly has a high-tech memoir in preparation, the entire record of his eccentric administration recorded in the memory of a word processor. These memoirs aren't just afterthoughts, hasty records thrown together to earn a few bucks or answer some critics' charges immediately after the leader has left office. Rather, these memoir writers kept diaries and employed whole platoons of secretaries to transcribe them, to keep and record notes, reports, papers, minutes of meetings, and transcripts of phone conversations while they were in office. Shouldn't our national leaders concentrate on their immediate responsibilities rather than on just recording them for posterity? Let them *make* history, not record it.

True to the genre, *Power and Principle,* Zbigniew Brzezinski's memoirs of his term as head of the National Security Council, is long, detailed, and well organized, though it could have had 150 pages trimmed. Granted, Brzezinski has a lot he wants to say, and it's important, after all, to have some insight into what it was like to be the chief proponent of an aggressive American foreign policy in an administration whose outstanding characteristic was its inability to make up its mind. Yet what Brzezinski has to say in this regard is plainly said in his perspicacious title which gives the theme of the conflict in foreign-policy thinking

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within the Carter Administration: that is, the perceived conflict between guarding America's interests beyond our own borders and conducting our relations with other nations according to disinterested moral principle. The tragic effects of this conflict are chronologically described in the three major parts of Brzezinski's book: "Comprehensive Initiatives," "Major Turning Points," and "Progress and Frustration." All show that high hopes and enthusiasm met the realities of international affairs (briefly, the evidence of Soviet aggression, as in Afghanistan), and turned into disappointment and defeat. It is the working out of this unresolved conflict—as Brzezinski would say, power vs. principle—in the Carter Administration that is the real subject of this book and which has the inevitability of tragedy. As such it would have significantly benefited from the exclusion of the many details of official organization, bureaucratic infighting, and even the personality sketches that Brzezinski includes, for the tragic theme is overlaid by a camouflage of hectic enthusiasm and concentration on management techniques that both Brzezinski and Carter took with them to their tasks of conducting the nation's foreign policy. Brzezinski seems unaware of how disaster overtook him, even as he describes its stages in detail. *Power and Principle* is tragedy written by a technocrat.

What is the nature of the conflict between power and principle? On an abstract level it is a question that has exercised philosophers including Plato and Kant; on a practical level the Carter Administration's inability to answer it brought about the collapse of its foreign policy. It is a question worth answering, since neither Carter, nor Brzezinski, nor Vance were stupid or corrupt. If the failure of Carter's foreign policy is not seen as the working out of an unresolved conflict of principle, which led to hesitation and lack of consistency, then we have the impossible task of explaining how intelligent, honest, and hardworking men could fail so miserably in setting a consistent course for America's foreign policy.

The issue that flummoxed Carter was: how is it possible to protect American interests and act at the same time in a moral manner? Obviously, there are two extremes to be avoided. Presumably America could act selfishly, only on behalf of its own immediate interests in a forceful and undiscriminating manner. The projection of a macho toughness becomes the responsibility of America's statesmen in this view. At the other extreme is the possibility of America's never acting out of self-interest, but purely as a sort of moral referee deciding international issues according to its high-minded ideals of self-determination, democracy, and human rights (in fact, liberal foreign policy is right now in the grip of a gnostic vision of virtue, Kantian in its theoretical basis and resembling the code of an English headmaster in its practical outcome).

These two extremes currently dominate America's foreign policy. In the Carter Administration, these contrary principles actually had human representatives, with Secretary of State Cyrus Vance taking the side of moralism and Brzezinski, of course, taking the side of pragmatism. Carter himself, the man who, after all, was responsible for determining and implementing foreign policy, was basically like Vance, a moralist in the area of foreign policy, but who as President was occasionally forced to take a more pragmatic view. Brzezinski's book alludes to Carter's difficulty in convincing the Soviets that the United States would stand up to them. Nor did the split on principles affect only relations with the Soviets. Early in the Iranian crisis, when the Administration suddenly realized that the Shah's government was crumbling, the issue of American aid to prop up his regime was discussed by Carter, Vance, and Brzezinski. Brzezinski advocated supporting the Shah but he quickly learned he was in the minority:

> I do not know what historical assumptions guided Carter's or Vance's approach to the subject, but I assume that their assumptions were different from mine and involved a somewhat different scheme of the world. To me, principled commitment to a more decent world order did not preclude the use of power to protect our more immediate interests; to the others, it was not for America to decide what transpired within Iran.

Brzezinski obviously believes that power and principle, or pragmatism and moralism, should be combined, but he does not say how or why. The "how," of course, depends on the specific set of events that make up each separate crisis, or issue. Thus, it is impossible to say how policymakers should act except as a generality. The "why," however, can be

In the Mail

***Into the Battle* by Dobrica Ćosić; Harcourt Brace Jovanovich; San Diego.** One-fourth of a fictional tetralogy about World War I in Serbia by a former member of the Central Committee of the Serbian Communist Party.

***Writing History and Making Policy: The Cold War, Vietnam, and Revisionism* by Richard A. Melanson; University Press of America; Washington, DC.** History is not written in a vacuum, through certain revisionist historians detailed herein may be inhabited by one.

***Aspects of Wordsworth and Whitehead: Philosophy and Certain Continuing Life Problems* by Alexander P. Cappon; Philosophical Library; New York.** Notes the author, "Wordsworth spent . . . a good many hours pondering society for every one he spent on poetry." Perhaps the poet had it backwards.

***Kinship and Consent: The Jewish Political Tradition and Its Contemporary Uses* edited by Daniel J. Elazar; University Press of America/Center for Jewish Community Studies; Washington, DC.** Millennia of tradition are not profitably ignored.

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answered: Not only do policies protecting America's interests not have to contradict a moral approach to foreign policy but they are frequently the most moral thing we can do. The best evidence supporting this proposition is the results of America's loss of influence in an area, i.e., what happens when we leave. In Vietnam, Cambodia, and Iran, the answer is the same—chaos, destabilization, civil war, the replacement of an authoritarian government with a totalitarian one, death and refugee status for millions of people. The further American influence is withdrawn from an area, the worse the situation becomes. When the Shah's government collapsed, the usual chorus of left-wing critics sang that the U.S. was only getting what it deserved for having supported a repressive regime out of exaggerated fear of the Russians. Now that the Shah and his associates are gone and the evil faces of Khomeini and his minions are exposed, it's clear that the present state of the Iranian people is worse than it was under the Shah. No critic now grumbles about the role of the CIA and Kermit Roosevelt in setting up the Shah, for Khomeini has made the Shah look like Pericles. The same will no doubt happen in Central America, for again we hear the same themes: the nobility of the revolutionary regime, the sins of the U.S., the greed of capitalists, the treachery of Ronald Reagan, and always, always, our "inordinate fear of Communism," to use Carter's own phrase.

In the end, the morality of our foreign policy cannot be separated from protecting the immediate concerns and interests of the U.S. Hence the artificiality of "human rights" as a criterion for America's support of noncommunist governments, which under the Carter Administration was completely detached from any sense of how much a policy could help or hurt us. The first requirement, after all, of a foreign policy is to relate our nation to other nations; the morality or immorality of our foreign policy depends on how we carry out our relations with other nations. Necessarily, relating to other nations includes promoting our own interests, representing our views, defending our integrity as a nation; otherwise we have no foreign policy at all.

The ethical question of how far we should go in protecting or extending America's interests overseas—whether we should take part in war, assassinations, subversion, spying, blockades, propaganda, disinformation, trade embargoes —depends in large part on how real the Soviet threat is. A greater threat allows for a wider range of ethical actions.

The Soviet danger is very real, and we have not only a right in terms of self-defense to oppose it, but an obligation as well. To be consistent, however, we must fight not only communism abroad, but also the materialism, atheism, and apathy in the face of human suffering in our own society. The sense of danger is mitigated by the fact that we do not have to defeat the Soviet Union militarily, but only fight a holding action until, by a law of Imperial Degradation, the Russians' empire collapses for the same reasons that those of the British and the Romans did. In the meantime, we do not need to violate our own principles, but we must be prepared to get our hands dirty. Above all, we must not confuse morality with not defending our own interests overseas. To paraphrase Charles Wilson: What's good for America is good for the world, and vice versa. □

Strange Gods

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza: *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins;* Crossroad; New York.

Rosemary Radford Ruether: *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology;* Beacon Press; Boston.

by Bryce Christensen

For most modern Westerners, the word *idolatry* conjures images of distant lands or times: saffron-clothed Oriental monks prostrate before golden Buddhas, ancient Aztec priests plunging their daggers into helpless virgins atop monumental temples, or iniquitous Israelites cavorting before Aaron's golden calf in the Sinai. Certainly, the cultural dominance of Judeo-Christianity has made these types of blatant and unsophisticated idolatry rare in the Occidental world. Indeed, the silversmiths who manufactured idols in the Apostle Paul's day presciently recognized that their trade could not long survive if his message prevailed. But their efforts to protect their livelihood by inciting the heathen population to riot against the Christian missionaries were in vain. The proud cries of "Great is Diana of the Ephesians" gave way to humble prayer to the transcendent Father of lights, and the fashioners of gods perforce found other employment.

But in the 20th century neoidolatry is alive and well as various craftsmen shape the "isms" of modernity into attractive icons suitable for fashionable devotion. And now, instead of putting the modern idolaters out of business, contemporary Christianity seems only too happy to subsidize the labors of god-makers, even permitting them to use their seminaries and classrooms as workshops. Rosemary Ruether and Elisabeth Fiorenza, for example, are busily constructing the trendy goddess Militant Feminism in *Sexism and God-Talk* and *In Memory of Her,* exhorting all to forsake the God of Scripture by bending the knee to their creation; yet, miraculously, the dustcovers of their anti-Christian polemics identify Ms. Ruether as professor of applied theology at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary and Ms. Fiorenza as professor of New Testa-

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ment theology at the University of Notre Dame. Even more fantastic, the acknowledgment pages of both works list numerous other church colleges and divinity schools who have courteously invited these women to their lecture halls, there to put Christ to public shame by crucifying Him afresh on a feminist rood. Presumably Ruether and Fiorenza have collected honorariums somewhat in excess of 30 pieces of silver (adjusted for inflation) for performing this service.

"*In Memory of Her* is an intense, scholarly study . . . . a huge and complicated task, here undertaken courageously."

—Commonweal

The reasons for which Judas Iscariot betrayed his Lord are obscure, but no one need wonder why these two writers reject Him: He is male, and the promotion of feminism is not the central tenet of His gospel. Consequently, the doctrine of the Incarnation must be eviscerated on the feminist altar. Ruether explicitly repudiates "the mythology about Jesus as Messiah" and informs the reader that "we can encounter Christ *in the form of our sister.*" We must therefore avert our eyes from Christ's suffering on the cross to behold instead the " 'passion drama' of female crucifixion on the cross of male sexism." Fiorenza is caught up in the same babbling spirit. She quotes with approbation Carol Christ's declaration that the feminist woman perceives "the saving and sustaining power . . . in herself" and therefore "will no longer look to men or male figures as saviors." Fiorenza also enthusiastically hails Elizabeth Cady Stanton as a true spiritual leader, citing as nearly scriptural Ms. Stanton's opinion that from the feminist perspective there can be "no fall, no frowning Judge, no Inferno, no everlasting punishment,—hence no need of a Savior."

For authors who have denied Jesus' unique divinity and saviorship, other doctrines centering on Him are easy to jettison as well. The physical resurrection, identified by Paul as the keystone of Christian hope, is unequivocally discarded by Ruether, who argues for "agnosticism" on this question and against the immortality of the spirit:

> Consciousness is the interiority of that life process that holds the organism together. There is no reason to think of the two as separable.

This heresy apparently did not trouble Fiorenza at all when she wrote her fulsome blurb for the dustcover. Nor is this surprising, since in Fiorenza's book, Christ is "resurrected" only in the divine "Sophia Spirit" (the feminist substitute for the Holy Ghost), who comforts God's people "from Christ's death to Her return in glory."

God the Father naturally fares no better than His Only Begotten Son. Ruether opens her book with a vignette depicting Him as a foolish and vain tyrant, while Fiorenza lauds those involved in "castrating" Him by rewriting the language of Scripture. Christ's merely mortal disciples are likewise shown no mercy: Peter appears as a self-serving fantasizer in Ruether's tome, while Paul is rendered a backsliding chauvinist in an imaginative "epistle" proudly displayed by Fiorenza as the work of one of her students. Mary, too, is horribly distorted when seen through the dark glass of feminism: Ruether slyly questions both Christ's divine parentage and Mary's chastity by styling her as one who made "her own choices about her body and sexuality without regard for her future husband"—apparently in a Bethlehem singles' bar. And if there was ever any serious doubt about whether those who attack Christian doctrine can nonetheless retain its "ethical substance," these books dispel it by scorning the Christian "identification of sin with anger and pride and virtue with humility and self-abnegation." In the neoethics of feminism, anger is "liberating grace," pride is virtue, and the self is the primary focus for a valid life. Of course, the reputation for cunning and intelligence which Satan has established over the centuries since he deceived the first woman would be in serious peril if this grotesque foolishness could be attributed to his direct commission. Thanks to the regents of Notre Dame University and Garrett-Evangelical Seminary, who are kindly certifying these women as "Christian" teachers, the Prince of Darkness has nothing to fear.

Fiorenza wishes to obliterate the "structural-patriarchal dualisms between Christian and Jewish women . . . between the church and the world, the sacral and the secular." Likewise, Ruether avers that insights gained from Judeo-Christianity "do not have a privileged relation to God over those that arise from Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism." The question then is: Why do feminists who despise Christianity choose to hold positions as official teachers of Christian theology? The answer is not simply their obviously clouded mental faculties. First is expedience: since feminist paganism has yet to win the support necessary to erect its own universities and seminaries, why not preach the good news of feminism at Christian institutions which offer their resources without requiring a shred of orthodoxy? The second reason for choosing such employment is subversion. Judeo-Christianity built Western culture, including its "sexist" institutions. If the

"Rosemary Radford Ruether's *Sexism and God-Talk* is firmly Christian theology. . . . The Bible itself thus provides the resources for her feminist critique of religion."

—Commonweal

"[*Sexism and God-Talk*] is a significant contribution to the continuing task of educating Christians . . . . the book is well worth reading."

—America

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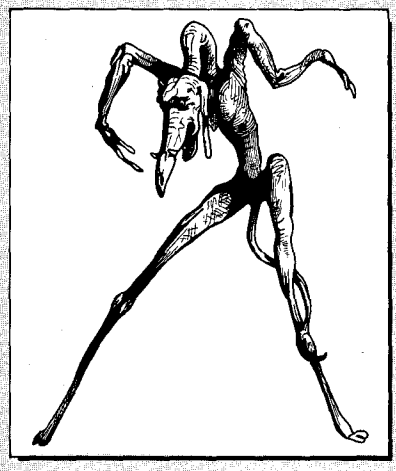
Neo-Salvation

At a recent gathering in San Francisco, the National Council of Churches considered an application for membership from the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, which teaches that homosexuality is "a gift from God." Most of the 27,000 members of this church are so gifted. In championing the cause of this denomination, liberal Methodist theologian Roy Sano called down fire and brimstone, warning that the Council should "fear for its soul" if it repudiated the homosexual congregations. He failed to mention that Moses and the Apostle Paul ran scared. □



new heaven and new earth of feminism are to be realized, both these institutions and their informing beliefs must be destroyed. How could this be accomplished more effectively than from within those very institutions? Fiorenza unabashedly announces that her intent in reinterpreting the New Testament as "a history of oppression" is "to undermine the legitimization of patriarchal religious structures," undoubtedly including the Vatican and the Catholic Church. And when Ruether declares that she "seeks to dismantle the institutional structures and refute the ideologies that incarnate alienation," she undoubtedly has in mind Protestant orthodoxy and the evangelical churches who preach it.

It is in this professed political intent that the chasm between these feminist idolators and traditional religion is most apparent. The worship of God the Father may have helped foster a patriarchal society, but that is not the *reason* He is worshiped. The Father is reverenced as the Father because the self-existent I AM revealed Himself as such, not because propatriarchal social engineers or activists contrived such an image. In contrast, Ruether and Fiorenza are quite self-consciously involved in creatively imagining a goddess who will serve their political and ideological ends. As Fiorenza admits, "the revelatory canon" for feminist theology "cannot be derived from the Bible itself" or from any "timeless theological ideas or norms," but must adapt itself to whatever is "politically necessary" to advance "women's struggle for liberation." Hence, no standard of truth is to be honored except "the criterion of appropriateness" to current feminist concerns.

The real focus of worship, then, is not the reconstructed goddess (or "God/dess"); she is merely a contingent instrument for reaching a politico-social destination. Like an Avis car, this goddess is the latest spiritual vehicle, not to be bought, but to be rented at nominal cost and conveniently left in the parking lot just as soon as we arrive at the feminist utopia. (This goddess may still be #2, but her promoters definitely try harder.) Nor should feminists be singled out as the only practitioners of this kind of utilitarian idolatry: numerous liberation theologians, homosexual apologists, and secular humanists have also become expert at torturing Scripture as they manufacture "usable" gods with sleek designs tested in the wind tunnels of modish progressive doctrine.

Its blasphemy notwithstanding, it is a brilliant strategy for enemies of Western religion and social order. They know that idolatry can have enormously disruptive consequences, as Paul and his companions discovered in Ephesus. Shrewdly guided, it may destroy cathedrals *and* courthouses. Indeed, Fiorenza and Ruether express their fervent solidarity with everyone—Marxists, lesbians, homosexuals, Third World revolutionaries, secularists, ecoradicals—engaged in the "liberation struggle" against all extant civil and religious hierarchies in the West. The contortions necessary to denounce the gang-rapes common in "tribal societies" while championing the superiority of Third World values over Western ones or to applaud the back-to-nature movement while insisting on the indispensability of abortion mills and chemical contraceptives do provide comic relief in these tediously self-serious books, but it is ultimately quite sobering to realize that this is the corrosive essence of the instruction given by professors paid to teach religion at two major Christian educational institutions. One even fears that the publication of these two works will be used to justify academic promotion and larger salaries for their authors.

That school administrators and some ecclesiastical authorities passively permit this sort of internal contradiction seems the most impenetrable of religious mysteries. Can it be that the prelate who presides over South Bend, Indiana, has not noticed that one of his prominent undershepherds has smashed the crucifix and erected a feminist totem in the middle of the sheepcote? Can the Protestant ministers of Evanston, Illinois, have failed to detect that the sign under which

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one of their well-paid generals is conquering looks less like the cross than like a NOW logo?

Perhaps the explanation of these conundrums is to be found in the case of Sonia Johnson, excommunicated from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints for her radical feminism. The whole incident was actually quite unremarkable and should not have merited even local media coverage. Nevertheless, major newspapers and national television and radio networks took up Ms. Johnson's case, almost uniformly romanticizing her as a martyr while caricaturing the Mormon Church as the Inquisition come anew. Ms. Johnson's heresy was represented as merely her support of the ERA, while her shrill attacks on the character of Church leaders and her doctrinal deviations, including the promotion of prayer to Mother in Heaven, were discreetly kept out of the general public's eye. Many of the same commentators who vehemently champion separation of Church and state when it comes to, say, prayer in the public schools then suggested that "someone" (presumably a governmental someone) ought to protect this poor woman from such awful abuse.

But no one could rightfully intervene and the Mormon bishop involved, without lighting a single faggot, did a perfectly horrid thing: he denied a woman who repeatedly and publicly attacked Church doctrine and authority the option of continuing to call herself a member of the Church. What then prevents the officials of other far larger and more widely respected denominations from taking the similar steps of dismissing, censoring, or otherwise disciplining avowedly pagan teachers like Ruether and Fiorenza? One suspects that the reason is not ignorance of their opinions and actions but rather a craven fear of the kind of media drubbing occasioned by the Johnson expulsion. However, since surveys have established beyond question that the media are dominated by people indifferent or hostile to religion, why should their opinions sway policy at religious institutions? Would the Christians who faced lions have quailed before Dan Rather? True, a public image of tolerance is quite valuable, especially these days. But is it more precious than the souls of thousands of students who, at great expense, attend Church rather than state schools, only to be taught heathenism by their theology teachers? It is distressingly ironic that Ruether can charge that "those who rule pay their professors to proliferate lies," while the professedly Christian administrators who "rule" her graciously pay her to teach any damn thing (literally) that she pleases. What indeed will become of institutions whose leaders cheerfully convert the donations and bequests of devout Christians into salaries and forums for well-read idolators? If Jesus was correct when He declared that a house divided against itself cannot stand, then the future for such institutions is very bleak. And if Ezekiel was right when he taught that those appointed as spiritual watchmen must bear the sins they could have prevented, then on the promised Day of Judgment more than a few deans of theology departments will join with the idolators in imploring the mountains to hide them from the face of their Lord. □

Multiple-Choice Quandaries

Hilma Wolitzer: *In the Palomar Arms;* Farrar, Straus & Giroux; New York.

Todd Walton: *Louie & Women;* E. P. Dutton; New York.

by Rebecca Woosley

The necessity of choosing is a fact of life. At even a tender age, one must choose between a doll or a tea set, a wagon or a tricycle, Captain Crunch or Frosted Flakes. As one becomes older, the choices become more difficult and more significant. When one is wise enough—or lucky enough—to choose well, things remain fairly smooth. But a wrong choice—of mate or career in particular—almost always spells trouble, and usually for others besides the one who has chosen badly. The difficulty of making choices rises in direct proportion to the number of available alternatives. A severely limited number of alternatives eliminates the pangs of indecision, making the selection process easier: one's life is not necessarily happier but it is certainly simpler. For instance, in medieval Europe a woman in her teens usually had only three possible options: she could continue to live with her family (if they so permitted); she could marry; she could take the veil. Life is no longer so broadly delineated; there are manifold alternatives, which is in some ways better. But a multitude of choices has a dangerous effect: once having chosen one is always aware of the other possible choices. When things get rough, one inevitably muses on what might have been, if only . . .

"[*In the Palomar Arms* is] a story demanding superlatives to describe its power."
—***Publishers Weekly***

Ms. Wolitzer's and Mr. Walton's novels are both about choosing and about coping with having chosen poorly. Each is also a commentary on taking responsibility for one's choices, considering the effect of them on the others in one's life, and living with the results. *In the Palomar Arms* has much the same flavor as the stew served for supper in the "Senior Home" that lends its name to the title: lukewarm, bland, tasteless. The dashes

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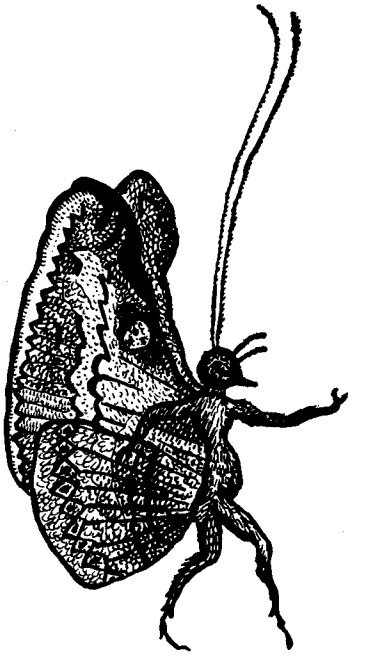
of spice that Ms. Wolitzer sprinkles in now and then (usually in the form of sexual intermezzos) don't help much. This tale of an aimless young woman and a man bored and frustrated with marriage is soporific rather than poignant. College student Daphne has no discernible goals until she becomes involved with Kenny; her aims then seem merely to be rationalizing their relationship and becoming his wife. She apparently has no idea how to choose; she simply accepts direction from whatever more dominant presences are around. Daphne moves through life as gullible as a puppy, as assertive as a sleepwalker.

Kenny, on the other hand, can and has chosen, but he is now disillusioned with his choices. It appears that he hasn't really chosen so badly, but that all the other possibilities "out there" seem ever so much more appealing and novel than his now-staid existence. His would, on the surface, seem to be a quite pleasant life: a good job, an attractive home, a beautiful wife, two delightful children. Appearances, of course, are deceptive. But Wolitzer does not—or cannot—probe beneath superficiality, so the reader is unable to evaluate or to judge the protagonist and his choices. Kenny wants, or thinks he wants, something more—or perhaps it's just something different. Wolitzer gives the reader no way to tell. Kenny goes after Daphne, when he meets her in a college night class, as if he were living in a fraternity house instead of wedded suburbia. His major problem, in the absence of any other explication, looks like boredom; his wimpy approach to his self-inflicted dilemma inspires much the same ennui in the reader.

In the hands of a writer of talent, one with a firm ethical anchor, such a story could mean something. But Ms. Wolitzer seems unable to offer either judgment or profundity. The tearing apart of a marriage is a soul-wrenching, life-changing process. No decent man (or woman) can simply negate a large block of years in his life and forget them. Kenny (that is, Wolitzer) never actually faces his responsibilities; he only worries about them. The denouement, when it at long last arrives, is thoroughly predictable: wife's attempted suicide, husband's frenzied remorse and renewed attempt to salvage the marriage. Ms. Wolitzer even evades the illicit lovers' final meeting, bringing Kenny only to Daphne's door. Finally, the emotionally mauled paramour quits her detested job and makes preparations to begin anew elsewhere. Her quiet acceptance of the outcome of the affair is, presumably, an indication that she has always known, deep down, that it would end this way. Her preparations for a change are apparently supposed to indicate her newly acquired emotional maturity.

Todd Walton's *Louie & Women* is a different approach to choosing. Structurally, chapters guided by the third-person narrator alternate with varying first-person discourse. The style is spare to the point of bareness. Walton apparently wants to present his characters in a kind of silhouette fashion. *Louie & Women* amounts to a series of vignettes that would fit well into the format of a weekly television series, a little on the order of one from the early 70's, *Then Came Bronson.* Mr. Walton is cited as the author of a screenplay as well as novels. The reader can see the connection, but his strategy works nevertheless.



Louie is an adult dropout. He is first presented in a lettuce field where he has been employed as migrant labor. Gradually, through subsequent flashbacklike chapters, a little more is learned about the choices that have led to his present situation—but virtually nothing of Louie the man. And that appears to be deliberate. Mr. Walton is saying: "Here is Louie and here are these women; these are their choices and the results." Period. But with such spareness, he is able to imply judgment—of the tart whom Louie rescues from rape, of the pathetic woman who sells her body to a wealthy degenerate in order to live what appears to her to be a refined, dignified existence, of the suicide of an older couple Louie meets in his wanderings.

The author presents these human beings with uncompromising honesty. They take responsibility for themselves, for their actions, their choices. Even when they run away, no blame is cast on another. They know right from wrong; if they sometimes choose to transgress—and they do—they are aware that it is a transgression. There is no rationalizing, no searching for "meaning," no blather about "finding" themselves or "raising" their consciousness. And therein lies the major difference between Mr. Walton and Ms. Wolitzer. Besides the fact that Walton is a far more skillful writer, he is able to look even unpleasant aspects of humanness in the face and write clearly about them. Wolitzer peers out of the corner of her eye, makes excuses, and proceeds to wrap a bland cloak of ambiguity and rationalization around whatever she sees.

Moral ambiguity, of course, is the order of the day in the 1980's. It's a pernicious order. It's the reason why *In the Palomar Arms* has received far more attention in print than *Louie & Women* has. Ms. Wolitzer follows slavishly the

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prevailing zeitgeist: the existence of right and wrong is flatly denied in favor of the much easier option of situation ethics. (Wolitzer's Daphne "needs frequent reassurance that she is not responsible for the destruction of his family, that it was an inevitability before she and Kenny ever met.") Mr. Walton's Louie is reminiscent of Steinbeck's vagrants in *Of Mice and Men:* a somewhat weak, basically good but flawed and quite thoroughly confused man. His choice to run away after his wife's cruel betrayal and a woman friend's imprisonment (for her impulsive and misguided defense of Louie) is an admission of that weakness. But he makes no excuses: "I wasn't strong enough." Mr. Walton knows the difference between right and wrong. Wrong —that is, sin—has existed since the dawn of man, a truism, but one that is forgotten or denied or ignored ever more frequently these days. One who chooses to do wrong may be forgiven, examined, explained, or understood, but he has still chosen to do *wrong.* The conflict between right and wrong has been a mainstay of literature for centuries. To deny the existence of wrong obviates that conflict, and with it, the excitement and illumination with which it informs literature. That's why Wolitzer's work has all the flavor and excitement of boiled zucchini. She's reduced to writing about excuses and evasions. *Louie & Women* seems to me a fine offering. Louie, confused and fallible though he may be, chooses, that is at least reaches for, virtue. That he sometimes falls short is an indication of his humanity. □

Where's the Baking Soda?

Nora Ephron: *Heartburn;* Alfred A. Knopf; New York.

Thomas Berger: *The Feud;* Delacorte Press/Seymour Lawrence; New York.

by Betsy Clarke

Nora Ephron is a genius at turning her personal life into cash. In her essays, which she has collected in previous volumes, she has taken us to events and places including her college reunion, therapy group, and her amniocentesis. However, take away her individualized experiences and the essays become identical to those of every other liberal writer: she is pro-Kennedys and anti-Kissingers, proentitlements and antidefense, proabortion and anti-South Africa, pro-Betty Friedan and anti-Julie Nixon Eisenhower. And, like the congressman who recently complained that the food-stamp program is inhumane because a mother might have to deprive her child of Crackerjack, Ephron has the liberal's bizarre attitude toward money. Rachel Samstat, television cook-philosopher and *Heartburn* heroine (and Ephron clone) is "poor." But for her diamond ring, her two homes, the foreign travel, her baby's nurse, her housekeeper, her husband, and her job, she would have nothing. (Nora Ephron has criticized William F. Buckley, Jr. for his ostentatiousness, but at least he doesn't gaze upon his luxuries and declare himself a pauper.)

Miss Clarke is a free-lance writer in Columbia, MO.

The only one of the above items that Rachel actually loses during the course of *Heartburn,* Ephron's first novel, is her husband, and he seems to be the least valuable to her. He is a newspaper columnist (those who "know" will read: Carl Bernstein) who has been having an affair with another woman throughout Rachel's second pregnancy. Upon discovering the betrayal, she loses faith in the possibility of fidelity, the marriage crumbles, and the heartburn begins. In a sense, *Heartburn* is like many made-for-TV movies—it is based on a media event. In this case it's Carl Bernstein's affair and Nora Ephron's retaliation, which was played out before the public in the papers. Too shallow to be therapeutic and not hostile enough for revenge, the novel seems simply a means of cashing in on the publicity.

The story is a sad one played for laughs; Miss Ephron admits as much. "I've done what I usually do—hidden the anger, covered the pain, pretended it wasn't there for the sake of the story," she confesses. But that is not really accurate, for without the pain and the anger, the novel is less a story than a personal showcase, a setting that Miss Ephron seems to crave. So, though divorce is imminent in this family with two baby boys, the spotlight is not on how the sons might be affected by the tragedy nor on what defect in the husband compelled his promiscuity with so much at stake. The issue is what Nora/Rachel thinks.

Never let it be said that Nora Ephron doesn't think. She thinks about Lillian Hellman, Cambodia, her mother, her father, friends who have wronged her, her love life, and her cooking. (Rachel is an essayist who sprinkles her books with recipes, and now so is Nora.) So, not surprisingly, we learn her point of view about everything. The facts, however, remain fuzzy. Thus the author manages to be self-absorbed without being in the least introspective.

> "Ephron . . . can be the most painfully funny two-time loser in America. . . . Long after the chatter has abated, *Heartburn* will be providing insights and laughter . . . the best-seller list cannot be far away."
>
> ***—Time***

Strangely, considering the author and the times, *Heartburn* is not a political book. The Kissingers are mentioned, of course, and Cambodia gets a nod. To be sure, her dream man is a registered Democrat who reads *The New Republic.* Nevertheless, Miss Ephron (perhaps because she is not running for anything)

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seems to have backed away from the political realm of the liberal establishment. There are even three rather negative observations about feminism. But even if she has learned a few lessons, Ephron still fails the course. Ephron and the reader conclude *Heartburn* with no more understanding of the male-female relationship than they had when they began.

"'The Feud' is a comic masterpiece."

—New York Times Book Review

"Thomas Berger may well be America's wittiest, most elegant novelist. . . . Seldom has so eloquent a voice been employed in the service of the comic burlesque; only *Candide* springs to mind."

—Village Voice

The Feud appears to be some sort of perverse stepchild to Roman or Shakespearean comedy, but intellectually it is more akin to *Family Feud* than to Plautus. Ordinarily, Thomas Berger can reveal how the mind and emotions play against each other with a certain amount of wit. His gift is in depicting the way in which trifling matters grow out of proportion and take on a life of their own. He can exaggerate human idiosyncracies to the point just before the characters become ridiculous and unfamiliar. The results can be fun and sometimes important. Sadly, however, Berger's heart does not seem to be in this novel. Whether the poor, rural, unskilled, and uneducated figures he has created here do not interest him as much as the urbane, philosophical people he has recently presented is unclear. Perhaps his style, initially so fresh, controlled, and surprising, does not wear well. Possibly his formula for success is shopworn. Even trump, after all, does not last indefinitely. Whatever the problem, this complicated and tiresome novel is nothing more than a smutty shoot-'em-up without Berger's usual concentration, irony, and mischievous tone.

The plot is unoriginal but not necessarily hopeless. The Beelers of Hornbeck and the Bullards of Millville begin feuding over a misunderstanding that occurs in the Bullards' hardware store. Soon the store burns down, then the Beelers' car blows up, both patriarchs are hospitalized, one dies, and, to paraphrase the politicians, pretty soon the whole thing adds up to real trouble. Naturally, but unbeknownst to the characters, the hardware store probably burned down because of the Bullard son's carelessness, and the car bomb was planted as a prank by an unrelated third party. As it is, there is a fair amount of retribution and, since a Beeler son is infatuated with a Bullard daughter, sneaking around.

The Feud has the ambience of *The Dukes of Hazzard* without its brevity, and pretty soon a reader wonders what the point is. Even more monotonous is Berger's automatic insistence upon portraying rural characters as stupid and redneck. Certainly rural areas have ignoramuses; they also have librarians and ministers. The author's focus on the sleaziest stratum of life in the provinces causes him to miss connecting with his audience. Life is simply different from that which Berger captures on his pages, and sometimes it is better. □

Twisting & Turning Totalitarianism

***1984 Revisited;* Edited by Irving Howe; Harper & Row; New York.**

by Alan J. Levine

As the year in which George Orwell's masterpiece was set approached, a wave of critics, eulogists, and scavengers emerged. *1984* is a work hard to attack directly, though that has been done, and some who profess to be praising Orwell's work would really prefer to bury it. E. L. Doctorow, in a recent *Playboy* article, provides a specimen of the latter. So do some of the participants in Irving Howe's provocative anthology, *1984 Revisited,* a work, with the exceptions of few shortcomings, that tends to be intellectually respectable. Most of the contributions to this collection—notably those by Leszek Kolakowski, Robert Nisbet, Richard Lowenthal, Bernard Avishai, and Howe himself—are excellent. It is hard to say the same for the essays of Michael Walzer, Mark Crispin Miller, and some others, as they represent attempts to warp Orwell's insights for their own purposes, or even out of existence. Among other things, they seek to destroy the distinction between totalitarianism and authoritarianism in which Orwell himself believed. (The more extreme cases even try to erase the distinction between totalitarianism and democracy.) Indirectly, they seek to reduce Orwell's work to a cold-war polemic—which some snide leftist critics have always insisted it was.

There is no doubt that Orwell based *1984* primarily on his insights into Stalin's Russia, not nazi Germany. Orwell's point was not merely to satirize Soviet oppression, though he did do that, but to carry the then-current trends to the next logical step in three ways. First, and most obviously, by showing a world in which totalitarianism had completely triumphed —even in Britain and the English-speaking countries, their strong tradition of liberty notwithstanding. Second, Orwell sought to portray a ruling group—the "Inner Party"—which, unlike earlier totalitarian regimes, was completely conscious of, and happy with, its own depravity. For Orwell, the exercise of power, construed

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in its most sadistic terms, was the true (but unadmitted) inner purpose of the Soviet and nazi regimes. The rulers of Oceania, however, no longer hide this from themselves. Third, Orwell sought to explore both the future of surveillance (through the "telescreen") and what was later to become known as brainwashing. It was commonly thought in the late 1930's and the 1940's that the victims in Stalin's show trials had somehow been "converted" into a belief in their own guilt. Orwell doubted that this conversion had occurred. He correctly thought that the victims had simply been tortured or blackmailed into confessing. But he went on to wonder whether science could make "true" forced conversion possible, and he developed this thought into the crowning horror of the world portrayed in *1984*.

If *1984* was not intended as a mere polemic against Stalinism, neither was it a mere literary reflection or product of the cold-war era, as an examination of Orwell's literary and nonfiction work shows. *1984* was the culmination of a series of earlier "negative utopias," or "dystopias," which stretched back at least to the turn of the century and with which Orwell was familiar. (It was the culmination in more than one sense: no dystopia produced since *1984* is as horrifying, nor has any approached *1984* in penetration or philosophical interest, with the possible exception of Bernard Wolfe's *Limbo.)* Orwell studied these earlier dystopias with great care and found Jack London's *The Iron Heel,* written before World War I, and Evgeny Zamyatin's *We,* written in 1923, the most impressive. The writings of Arthur Koestler and Franz Borkenau, both personal friends of Orwell, were important sources of his ideas; Borkenau's book *The Totalitarian Enemy,* published in 1940, expresses some of the notions later found in *1984.* Perhaps the most important of all Orwell's sources was James Burnham's *The Managerial Revolution,* published in 1941. This work predicted that capitalism and the nation-state system were coming to an end, but that they would not be replaced by socialism as it had been understood before 1914. Rather, society would pass under the control of a new ruling class, the "managers," a collectivist hierarchy. The world would be ruled by three "superstates," which would probably be totalitarian, based in North America, Europe, and the Far East. The influence of all these sources, especially Burnham's, can be documented not only in *1984* but also in Orwell's essays and reviews.

Michael Walzer's essay, "On Failed Totalitarianism," is essentially an attempt to argue not only that totalitarianism is passé—which is suggested in several other essays in *1984 Revisited*—but also that there is no important distinction between totalitarianism and other nondemocratic regimes—the latter generally grouped together under the rather vague rubric of "authoritarian"—even though Orwell and others perceived one. Since the 1960's a determined effort has been made by the left to discard the entire concept of totalitarianism. Walzer does not have the nerve to join this group, but indirectly his arguments have the same objective. This effect results partly from Walzer's misconstruing of the totalitarian-authoritarian distinction and partly from his using only one peculiar version of the concept of totalitarianism. Unfortunately, that is not the version that interested Orwell; in fact, it is a rather dubious notion that was formulated only after his death.

The word *totalitarianism* was coined by Mussolini in 1932. Totalitarian regimes exist where one party monopolizes all power in society. It does not merely enforce a political dictatorship, but replaces or controls all institutions and dictates—or at least seeks to —every activity of its citizens. Moreover, it usually attempts to destroy some social group, e.g., Jews in the case of nazism, the bourgeoisie in the case of communist regimes. Except perhaps for the last, most of these aspects of totalitarian regimes were fully apparent in the 1930's, when the term came into widespread use. By 1940, when Orwell began using it, many writers found it so familiar that they no longer felt it necessary even to define it for their readers. In this sense, totalitarianism obviously existed and

LIBERAL CULTURE

Subtle Wisdom

One Ms. Ehrenreich, the liberal left's newest first lady of sexual sagacity, praising a new feminist tract on sexology in *The Nation,* the flagship of American gauchism:

> The short stories by Myra Goldberg and Carole Rosenthal explore women's attraction *even* to men who are manifestly creeps.

The emphasis on *even* is ours. We all know that crass misjudgments are quite common to existential vicissitudes. Moreover, without some ill-fated human propensities, their omnipresence, and their consequences, neither *Manon Lescaut* nor *Washington Square* nor *An American Tragedy* nor most of Thomas Hardy's novels could have been written. Now, what about men who are attracted *even* to sluts and slatterns? □

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continues to exist. It also differs considerably from other forms of government that, whatever their evils, did not usually control *every* aspect of society or destroy entire ethnic or social groups.

Walzer, and some of the other authors in *1984 Revisited,* do not use totalitarianism in its original and obvious sense. Instead, they contrast both *1984* and current communist realities with a somewhat crabbed and scholastic theory of totalitarianism evolved by Hannah Arendt and others in the early 1950's. This theory, based on a narrow interpretation of Stalinism, deemed one-man despotism in its most extreme form and drastic purges of the ruling party as essential parts of totalitarianism, though such phenomena had existed only part of the time in the U.S.S.R. since 1917. Moreover, some of the theorists of this school tended to see totalitarian rule as a streamlined, efficient machine of power without major factional disputes. The last notion, of course, is not an accurate picture of any totalitarian regime at any time. As experience since 1953 has shown, neither the most extreme form of one-man despotism nor a permanent purge is a necessary part of totalitarianism.

In fact, none of these elements was essential to the original theory of totalitarianism, or to Orwell's projection of future possibilities. Orwell, as we know from his essays, did not regard totalitarian regimes as efficient. Moreover, in *1984,* aside from discussing the Inner Party's *motives,* Orwell showed remarkably little interest in discussing the nature of the ruling group. It is not clear whether "Big Brother" is a living dictator or (as seems more probable) an immortal synthetic front for a collective oligarchy. Whether the Inner Party is a harmonious whole or a collection of feuding factions is a subject in which Orwell had no interest; it was enough to show that disputes among the rulers will not help the ruled.

Perhaps the most inane misuse of *1984,* however, is a notion first aired by Erich Fromm, in an essay appended to a popular paperback reprint of the novel. Fromm's notion is implicit in some of the sillier essays in *1984 Revisited.* Fromm and others suggest that a regime of the sort described by Orwell could result from the pressures of the arms race and the cold war. E. L. Doctorow has produced a prize specimen of this sort of idiocy; he declares that we are already arriving at a situation like that envisaged by Orwell.

But there is no warrant for this sort of supposition in *1984.* The regimes described therein are clearly the product of war and violent revolution, not of the pressures of political evolution. In recounting the origins of "oligarchical collectivism" we are specifically told that there was an atomic war in the 1950's in which hundreds of atomic bombs were dropped on major cities. The Party then took power in a violent revolution and civil war. Orwell thus based his work squarely on the history of actual totalitarian regimes that arose from war and extreme crisis. There is little evidence that Orwell thought that totalitarianism could simply "evolve," though he constantly warned that totalitarian *ideas* were everywhere, ready to take root in suitable conditions. There is a good deal of evidence (see, particularly, his 1947 article "Toward European Unity") that he thought a world like the one described in *1984* was a potential outcome of the world situation. He regarded both a third World War and a final collapse of capitalism as likely but not inevitable. It was conceivable, he thought, that a war could be staved off for a long time, and that internal changes might take place in the U.S.S.R. And he thought it was possible that "even if the world falls apart into three unconquerable superstates, the liberal tradition will be strong enough within the Anglo-American section of the world to make life tolerable and even offer some hope of progress." Orwell did not foresee exactly what happened in the following decades, but he at least envisioned the main possibilities. That, and not just the prognostication he outlined in *1984*—one which we have neither realized nor securely rendered impossible—should make his claims as a prophet secure. □

Erasing Mason-Dixon

John Shelton Reed: *Southerners: The Social Psychology of Sectionalism;* University of North Carolina Press; Chapel Hill.

T. Harry Williams: *The Selected Essays of T. Harry Williams;* Louisiana State University Press; Baton Rouge.

by Edward J. Lynch

The South has an enduring status as a region somewhat separate from the main thrust of American life. The tension between agrarian and commercial impulses in American society, epitomized by the yeomen idealized in Thomas Jefferson's *Notes on the State of Virginia* and the striving industrial class whose rise was promoted by Alexander Hamilton's *Reports* as Secretary of the Treasury, had its most bitter dimension in the conflict over the status of slavery. Although the American Founders sought to put slavery on the road to eventual extinction because they recognized it as an evil at odds with the first principle of the Declaration of Independence, substantial portions of the South resisted every scheme of emancipation, a resistance that intensified as opposition to slavery increased around the country. The most candid Southerners conceded that slavery could not endure among any people genuinely animated by the principles of the Declaration, so they recommended discard-

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ing the founding principle and replacing it with a new cornerstone: a doctrine of racial superiority which led some to concoct the notion that slavery could be a "positive good."

The Northern victory in the Civil War cannot be fully and properly understood as the result of a superior industrial base and a larger population prevailing over a people who had remained true to a set of agrarian, traditional values. A notable bit of nostalgia that frequently passes for conservatism today appeals to the enduring elements of these agrarian sentiments. Although it is obvious that the policies of Reconstruction—administered with a vengeance by Radical Republicans who had resisted Abraham Lincoln's tempered and prudent policies throughout the war—provided the seeds for many new discontents following the North's victory, any reconciliation of the protracted antagonisms that maintain current sectionalist sentiments within American society must ultimately depend upon unreconciled Southerners acknowledging that Northern victory was the only means of maintaining America's true traditional principles. In other words, before the South can lay any legitimate claim to the notion that it is a region maintaining a tradition within a country deviating toward the cosmopolitan, it must transcend the legacy of the first deviation from the American tradition, the one given impetus by Thomas Jefferson and full thrust by John C. Calhoun.

Although we have elected three Southern Presidents during this century, (and, surely, the damage that Woodrow Wilson, Lyndon Johnson, and Jimmy Carter have wreaked on our institutions constitutes excessive retribution for anything done during Reconstruction), abundant evidence indicates that the South remains less than fully assimilated into American society. Unfortunately, neither of these books comes to grips with the reasons for the South's protracted insulation within American society. They do, however inadvertently, provide abundant evidence of the limitations of the forms of inquiry that dominate the teaching of history and the social sciences, and therefore provide an indication of the reasons why many people schooled in those disciplines are unable to comprehend genuinely principled conflict.

John Shelton Reed's *Southerners* has a misleadingly broad title for an essay of considerably less scope. Reed's text is much more aware of the book's limitations than the title implies. The era from 1945 through the present has been a period of considerable change in the South. Beginning with V. O. Key's *Southern Politics*, social scientists have amassed an impressive body of evidence that would enable an ambitious researcher to trace the changes that have transpired during the past generation and assess them or predict potential new directions. The Institute for Research in Social Sci-

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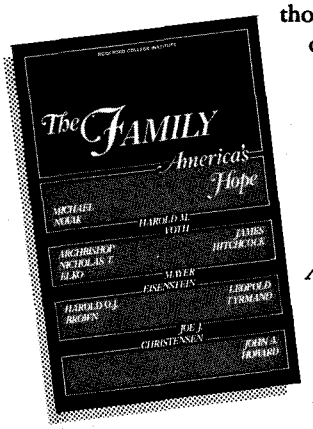

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ence at the University of North Carolina allowed Reed and a colleague to insert some questions measuring sectionalism in a survey of North Carolinians done in 1971. Reed sustained several impressions of things he would like to say about the region in the decade since that survey, and this book is an attempt to use the data from this survey to say them. One suspects that the results are less than satisfying, even for Reed.

An early paragraph of his concluding chapter, for example, alludes to changes in the South and asserts, "these changes have had momentous consequences.... Some of these changes ... have been improvements; others, in my view at least, have been regrettable; perhaps most have simply been changes. But, for better or worse, Southerners are becoming more 'modern,'—that is to say more 'American' in many respects." Lacking in the book is an articulation of the analytic foundation that enables Reed to view some changes as "improvements," others as "regrettable," and still others with indifference. What is it about modernity that enables him to identify it with Americanism and label elements of modernization detrimental to the South and, by implication, to the nation? One suspects that Reed could write an intriguing book answering some of these questions; this isn't it. Part of the failure can be attributed to the data base (it is impossible to measure change over a generation with a snapshot survey taken at one point in the era), part can be attributed to inadequate research (the bibliography contains few references to the classic studies of Southern political life), and part must be attributed to the author's inclination to elaborate on the data he has accumulated rather than to bring the data to bear on the questions that really concern him. As a result, the volume is of limited utility for academic specialists.

T. Harry Williams's essays are wonderful experiences in historical scholarship. The author is thoroughly familiar with the topics he tackles, writing from primary sources while arguing with the secondary literature in a usually elegant style. He considers the range of human traits involved in all of his subjects and demonstrates the differences that distinguish first-rate leaders from lesser lights. He is especially insightful when dealing with Civil War generals (Yankee and Confederate) and other military leaders (particularly MacArthur and Eisenhower); he is enlightening, albeit somewhat strained, in his efforts to provide favorable historical assessments of Huey Long and Lyndon Johnson.

Williams's strengths and flaws are most apparent when he deals with the man who commanded the Northern generals, Abraham Lincoln. Williams comprehends the opposition that surrounded Lincoln, both Radical Republicans who wanted slavery abolished regardless of the consequences for the nation's system of constitutional government and less heated Northerners who wanted the Union restored regardless of the consequences of slavery. He explains the bases from which each of the contesting parties operated, and he appreciates the tensions that maintained the conflicts and impeded cooperation during the Civil War. Unfortunately, Williams lapses into that most American evasion of explanation, labeling Lincoln a "pragmatist" and portraying him as a political physicist, pushing here, pulling there, always balancing to keep things on as even a keel as possible. One almost gets the impression that Lincoln was an odd sort of weather vane, always leaning into the prevailing winds to avoid toppling from a precarious perch.

The evasion is disconcerting because however prominently the political physicist prances on his perch while balancing competing interests, the "pragmatic" label encourages historians and students to concentrate on the winds blowing around him rather than inquire into the principles that might underlie the alleged "pragmatist." The technique invariably leads historians to see these subjects as the product of forces around them, rather than as leaders responsible for governing the forces that would shape lesser mortals.

Yes. Lincoln did compromise and balance where he decided it was necessary, but unlike other compromisers of his era, Lincoln argued from principles that guided his compromises, so that he could tell others where compromise was appropriate and where it was not. Yes, Lincoln was pushed in a great many directions that he did not particularly prefer, like any other democratic leader, but unlike most other leaders, and in contrast to Williams's argument, Lincoln was a systematic thinker whose principles, rooted solidly in the Declaration of Independence, enabled him to distinguish major issues from minor ones and to discern which compromises would further the principles that he advocated. The inability to explicate the principles behind Lincoln's politics is a major failure of historical scholarship because these principles form the key distinction between President Lincoln and the

In the Mail

***Light Year '84* edited by Robert Wallace; Bits Press; Cleveland.** The only real problem with this collection of pieces by 82 poets is found on the cover, where it says that the book includes "funny poems." Can a cassette laugh track be far behind?

***The Creative Writer's Phrase-Finder* by Edward Prestwood; ETC Publications; Palm Springs, CA.** Any writer who thinks that this book of over 9000 hackneyed expressions is helpful should start thinking about another hobby.

***Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* by C. Everett Koop and Francis A. Schaeffer; Crossway Books; Westchester, IL.** With abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia on the rise, it appears that the race is being tripped up at the gate.

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weather-vane pragmatists who pursue the Presidency, between democratic leadership and servile obeisance to public opinion. Williams's appreciation of Lincoln would have benefited from a reading of Henry Jaffa's *Crisis of the House Divided.*

The reconciliation of the protracted antagonism in American life requires that both sides come to terms with Abraham Lincoln. The South, however strongly it identifies with American traditions today, must concede that it once embraced deviations from those traditions, ones that impaired American lives and liberties. Once we have overcome this deviation from the tradition of liberty, we will be in much better condition to counter the perils to liberty embedded in the contemporary counsel of deviations far more dangerous than pragmatism. □

Bouillabaisse by Ear

Denis MacShane: *François Mitterrand: A Political Odyssey;* Universe Books; New York.

by Will Morrisey

Years before many Americans noticed him, France's socialist president made a career while provoking contrary sentiments. He evidently prefers not to be understood. Conservatives governing America must nonetheless decide what to think about a ruler who supports us and opposes the Soviets in Europe while opposing us and supporting Soviet allies in Latin America. This biography can contribute to that effort, although to a small degree. Denis MacShane accurately describes his book as "accessible," not "exhaustive or definitive." It is frequently polemical. "In most capitalist democracies," he laments, "ideas of the Left are restricted either by not being published or by attaining only a limited distribution in book form." A few pages later, he claims to have watched the 1981 French presidential election reports on a television "in a small apartment in a working class district of Paris." As in most such writing, the allegedly matter-of-fact statement is absurd while the patently theatrical one is believable.

Mitterrand can brush facts aside in a similar manner as he strains to realize the fictive. He came to politics after studying literature and music in Paris during the 1930's. He still "disdains the technical detail of economics" (as MacShane puts it), telling the French: "You are either for the exploiters or the exploited." He sees capitalism as a vast appetite; he ignores its productivity. One might generously describe this as a literary sort of view. Were MacShane and Mitterrand capable only of rhetorical posing this book could pass unremarked. But MacShane to some extent and Mitterrand to a further extent offer more than that.

After Hitler's conquest of Paris, Mitterrand escaped from a prisoner-of-war camp; he worked for the collaborationist government at Vichy while aiding the Resistance. (He managed to earn decorations for both activities.) He entered parliamentary politics after the war, involving himself with a succession of small parties, really "political grouplets," that satisfied "his taste for leadership and position." He won his first election by campaigning against the Communist Party, nationalization, and bureaucracy. "Even with the most charitable interpretation," MacShane intones, "it was a campaign of almost undiluted opportunism. But it worked." In his first ministerial position, he won the respect of Maurice Thorez, the cynical boss of the French Communist Party, by breaking a strike. (Thorez elicits MacShane's most bizarre description: "a close personal friend of Stalin.")

Throughout the 1950's, Mitterrand remained a firm if reformist supporter of French colonialism. As the minister responsible for Overseas Territories, he wooed African nationalists away from the Communist Party, then advocated a similar policy toward Ho Chi Minh and even Mao—who were probably not so susceptible to Gallic pleasantries. About Algerian nationalists he said, "There can only be one form of negotiation: war."

All of this *politique,* real and surreal, came from a man who insisted on his leftist credentials. It undercuts his claim that he opposed de Gaulle's return to power in 1958 simply because too many of the General's supporters "wanted vengeance on the poor," for some unspecified reason. MacShane describes this dissent as "an act of political courage for a man who up to that moment had been considered to be most obsessed with his career." He quickly and sensibly adds that "At the age of forty-one, per-

Mr. Morrisey is author of Reflections on De Gaulle *(University Press of America).*

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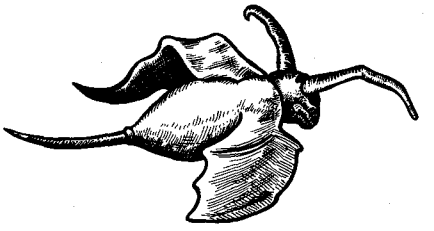
haps Mitterrand thought that he could wait a few years until the sixty-eight-year-old de Gaulle vanished and the traditional political forces re-emerged." Indeed, Mitterrand lost his seat in the National Assembly but soon reappeared, running as de Gaulle's main opponent in the 1965 presidential election. A year later, *Le Monde's* editor wrote, "One does not believe in his sincerity so much as his agility."

The same writer nonetheless added that "François Mitterrand, unlike most politicians, is worth more than he appears." The actual Mitterrand excels the fictional one Mitterrand celebrates but prudently fails to embody. His dealings with Marxism and the Communist Party illustrate this. In a 1969 book, Mitterrand "openly embraced Marxist concepts, though he admitted that he had never made a detailed study of Marx." That aversion of the eyes undoubtedly made embracing the ideology less repugnant. He accepted Marx's social/economic determinism but rejected "proletarian" dictatorship: "We are here to conquer power, but only after we have won over the minds of our fellow citizens." He wants democracy as a means and not only as a perpetually deferred end. Marx and Lenin scorn such "bourgeois formalism," and neither address the unconvinced as "fellow citizens." Marxism of the Mitterrand variety retains a place for civility.

It also cares for individuality. MacShane quotes his comment on the prison camp: "Being obliged to live with a mass of people, one gets to know solitude." Politically, this makes liberty, not equality, "the great problem on the road to Socialism." In a passage from his edited diary/notebook, *The Wheat and the Chaff* (Seaver Books; New York; 1982), Mitterrand insists that socialism must "prove . . . it has returned to the sources, its own sources, that it is the daughter of the revolutions where one swore 'freedom or death' and kept one's word." A Marxist would complain that these were bourgeois revolutions. To his lasting credit and discredit, Mitterrand is not listening. Credit, because no Marxist could write that "the worst tyranny is that of the spirit," which will "lie in wait for its prey until the end of time." Discredit, because he prefers, or pretends, to ignore that the communists' willingness to temporize aims at a dictatorship presented lyingly ("dialectically") as a means to effect the "withering away" of the state. Moreover, after deploring the solitude of mass-life and spiritual tyranny, he can stumble into this enumeration of the kinds of "dignity and responsibility" freedom should serve: "abolition of the death penalty; giving women control of their own personal destiny, i.e., contraception and abortion; divorce by mutual consent; the right to vote at age 18, and so on." "Bourgeois" in the best sense, he is also "bourgeois" in the worst sense.

"Bourgeois" socialism can more easily anger Marxists than it does conservatives. MacShane plausibly suggests that after Mitterrand took over direction of the Socialist Party in 1971 the ensuing alliance with George Marchais's Communist Party was a marriage of convenience and was understood as such by both partners. The dissolution of this "Union of the Left" came in September of 1977; Mitterrand has suggested that Marchais acted in response to the Soviet position taken that January condemning such alliances. The conservative argument that a Socialist government would be a Trojan horse lost some of its plausibility. This, along with President Giscard's blunders, France's high unemployment, and Mitterrand's appeal to the Gaullist tradition yielded a victory by three-and-one-half percentage points in the 1981 election.

MacShane surveys the first month of the Mitterrand presidency, citing a 27 percent increase in public spending, the nationalization of 39 banks (95 percent of French bank funds are now under state control, up from 70 percent), and the nationalization of an additional 14 percent of industry, bringing the total to 32 percent. He wrote the book too early to mention the subsequent violent disorders in Paris as unemployment remained high and inflation got worse. MacShane loses the chance to predict trouble by misunderstanding a conversation Mitterrand had with Henry Kissinger late in 1975. Kissinger, MacShane writes, indulged in an "anti-Communist tirade" that was "circular" and "dialectically pointless." As Mitterrand himself recounts it in *The Wheat and the Chaff*, what Kissinger had to say was quite pointed indeed. Why nationalize industry, he asked, when nationalizing would only cause your head of state to be blamed for every economic problem? The socialist program would make the French less governable than ever.



Mitterrand replied that he sincerely wanted the state to wither away, not by dictatorship but by ever-increasing decentralization and "autogestion"—literally, self-direction or self-rule, both political and economic. He concludes his book by claiming that technology, far from requiring increased hierarchy, can constitute "the decisive instrument of liberation" if a genuinely socialist ethos guides it. "Data processing, biology, nuclear physics: The great fields of knowledge are open to conquistadors setting out in the name of democracy." It makes one think that the "political odyssey" MacShane describes has been undertaken by a Ulysses who rides a horse named Rocinante.

Unlike MacShane, Mitterrand sees Kissinger's point and wishes he had more time to consider it. He is a man with a taste for thinking but without the leisure for sustained thought. This injures him more than it would injure a conservative or moderate politician because, as a democratic socialist, he cannot refer to a well-established social and political tradition that has, so to speak, done a measure of thinking for him. (Democra-

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tic socialism has an established intellectual tradition, of course; it is recent but voluminously recorded. However, it takes time to read the many volumes.) The French word *moeurs* means both morals and customs; Mitterrand's socialism has moral sentiments but no customs to make them habitual. This yields precisely what Kissinger foresaw: political overextension.

It also yields lifelong improvisation, and the mistakes that inevitably follow. Mitterrand first opposed the Gaullist constitution's strong presidency and now supports it; he opposed relinquishing any colonies, then bowed to their loss; he opposed French nuclear weapons until he changed his mind after the Soviets overran Czechoslovakia; he opposed de Gaulle, then ran for office as the inheritor of Gaullism; he attacked Giscard for intervening militarily in Chad, then sent in troops himself. He eventually learns the right lessons, which is more than any ideologue can say. But he must learn the hard way. Now that he rules his country, his countrymen share the hard knocks.

Americans will not suffer as much as the French. Mitterrand learned his basic lessons in foreign policy during the 1930's. "The righteous must be stronger than the strong if they want to be involved in world affairs," he wrote in 1938, at the age of 21, criticizing French and British weakness after Hitler's annexation of Austria. Some 40 years later he told Marchais, "I will not go down in history as the person responsible for leaving France unarmed in a world [that] is not." And to Brezhnev, in 1975:

> Why these troops and arms massed on the soil of Europe? And those rockets pointing toward our cities? Our specialists have never located so many nor such powerful ones. The state of NATO forces in that sector does not justify such excessive armaments.

MacShane, a much younger man who finds Soviet viciousness harder to believe, suggests that Mitterrand has another motive to avoid breaking with the United States: he fears Allende's fate. A CIA plot against the life of a French president strikes me as unlikely. Serious fear of same by a French president strikes him as unlikely, too.

Mitterrand will remain anti-Soviet in Europe, anti-U.S. in Latin America. Because he counts for more in Europe than in Latin America he will help more than he hurts, at least in the short run. His party is another matter. It may drift toward neutralism after Mitterrand goes if Mitterrand does not educate its younger members as he educated himself. Idealist or opportunist, François Mitterrand will not betray the West. But to help save it he will have to become a statesman. □

Cracked Crystal Balls

Alvin Toffler: *Previews and Premises;* William Morrow; New York.

Jeremy Rifkin: *Algeny;* Viking Press; New York.

by Richard Peters

The forecasters have had a bad year. That uncertainty of acuity that characterizes those who predict the weather has long been obvious; the predictions of their brethren in the field of economics are similarly infamous. President Reagan's economic policies were supposed to make 1983 a disaster, but the economy is rapidly improving. The only worrisome aspect of the recovery is that economic forecasters are now waxing more and more optimistic. Alvin Toffler and Jeremy Rifkin are forecasters who attempt much more than mere meteorologists or economists, and whose reach is almost certain to exceed their grasp by an equally greater margin.

Mr. Toffler seems an earnest soul who tries to be objective and to call the shots as he sees them. His latest book, however, could just as well have not been written. There are two reasons for this: first, anyone who has read *The Third Wave* will already know everything Toffler currently believes about the future; second, the format of the book requires a tiresome dialogue with a leftist who asks all the usual Marxist questions. Consequently, Toffler has to recount the well-known failures of Marxist analysis and prediction. This is made all the more wearying by the informed reader's immediate recognition that if the leftist could really hear the answers he would long since have stopped asking those kinds of questions.

Mr. Toffler makes a constant plea for women's rights, apparently based on personal prejudices from his childhood and adolescence. This theme, which is minor but emphasized, has little to contribute to the book's thesis and seems to be Mr. Toffler's way of assuring his interlocutor that Toffler, too, is a nice fellow, and as such cares about minorities and other worthy causes. Mr. Rifkin is earnest but not open, and is not content with calling the shots as he sees them. Instead, he is facile and slick. Nor does he mind using exactly the same argument to prove both sides of the question. Inconsistent logic is perhaps the gravest fault of *Algeny.* It is curious that Mr. Rifkin can, in whole sections of the book, follow flawlessly the logical train of a technical argument and then suddenly make statements which are nothing less than leaps of faith. If they are not leaps of faith then they are acts of bad faith: activist propaganda intended to mold the reader's thought, not persuade him of the logic of Mr. Rifkin's argument.

For example, the first part of the book is devoted to an attack on Charles Darwin. The tone is hostile, superior, and condescending. Later Mr. Rifkin announces that Darwin was not an evil man and that Darwin's cosmology was "not the product of intrigue." This comes after all his

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implications that the whole idea of evolution was a bourgeois plot led by Darwin to pacify a working class already successfully bribed away from concern for the poor by the fruits of the Industrial Revolution. It was neither necessary nor useful to attack Darwin as Mr. Rifkin does in the first part of his book. He could have made as persuasive an argument there as he later makes about the weakness of the theory of evolution in order to show the contemporary cultural influences on theoretical and cosmological thought in Darwin's day. In the second section of *Algeny* an interesting theoretical argument is made, one drawing on some of the most respected scientific and epistemological thinkers. It systematically demolishes the neo-Darwinist position and leaves the reader with no convincing scientific explanation for speciation. This discourse is only slightly marred by Mr. Rifkin's inability to resist condescending to his betters, as when he talks about Darwin's "quaint" scientific notions, and the like.

In the very last pages of *Algeny* Mr. Rifkin finally shares what he considers his crucial insight: trust in ecology. This closes the third section, in which he details the cultural biases and misdirections of current and future biological theory bonded to cybernetics. He carefully depicts the primrose path (which is to be built by genetic engineers) down which humanity will wander while losing its soul, not tragically like Faust but impulsively like Hoffmann. Mr. Rifkin does not attempt to explain what *his* cosmological position is, nor does he acknowledge its culturally determined biases and distortions. Instead, he urges his position upon his readers as an expiation for guilt. He claims that our guilt is deep and ancient; it concerns the "debt of our very existence," meaning that humanity must act so as "to represent the interests of the cosmos." Mr. Rifkin starts sounding like a mystic imparting transcendental illumination.

Mr. Rifkin, then, emerges explicitly as a believer in ecology, and implicitly as a gnostic. This helps explain his condescension and his moralizing. His leaps of faith make sense, not substantively, but because he is a gnostic enlightened by a transcendental vision. Mr. Rifkin presumably wants people to believe that all cosmologies are false save Mr. Rifkin's. This is no surprise from an activist who began in the 60's. Such activists were, and remain, convinced of their moral superiority. They were long ago assured by the likes of Charles Reich (*The Greening of America*) that they are the Elect. And they moralize endlessly. Sadly, they all lack the one thing that they desperately need: a deity.

Perhaps the great tragedy of the modern age lies in the "death" of religion. This death is certainly true for a substantial portion of the population of the West. Several generations have reached adulthood unable to believe in God, or any god. Darwin's theory, regardless of its correctness, undermined the biblical notion of divine Creation; Freud considered religion an illusion; and Marx damned it as the opiate of the people. None of the major modern discoveries of science, e.g., the Theory of Relativity, required, or even took into account, a Divinity. Raised in such a cosmology, much of the youth of Western culture simply cannot seriously think in supernatural terms. This loss of religion can be seen as an outcome of the Industrial Era (which is now as outmoded as Marxism and capitalism, according to Mr. Toffler). Yet, not only do people need religion, but they require it as the central organizing factor in their lives. However, many of the "main line" Protestant churches, having largely lost the concept of evil, are rapidly becoming secularized centers for social progress, rather than sources of divine inspiration. These churches increasingly lose members to the fundamentalist churches, which continue to preach good and evil and to make spiritual experience the cornerstone of their religious faith. Meanwhile, a segment of modern youth turns to cults of every pseudoreligious stripe, in which members live a monastic life, totally controlled by the cult's rules, and devote their efforts to the economic maintenance of their establishment. Third, another segment of youth turns to psychedelic drugs as the path to mystical experiences of a quasi-religious sort; these experiences also become the central organizing factor in their lives. Fourth, the Catholic Church appears to be going the way of the "main-line" Protestant churches, and, like them, is losing members to the "born-again" churches. The Catholic Church demonstrates an increasing inability to control its clergy and its laity. Fifth, a sizable number of people who choose not to believe at all have become, or lean towards being, social activists, some of whom will drift into the revolutionary gnosis. For these unbelievers the New Left vision of utopia, "the revolution," will provide a sense of moral integrity, superiority, and enlightenment which is tantamount to a religious experience. Such activists view themselves as members of the Elect, and organize their lives around this belief. This is essentially a religious commitment without a deity. Finally, consider the great numbers of people in any country, in any age, who have found contentment or meaning in living the religious life in its most complete sense, as members of monasteries, convents, ashrams, and the like.

In an increasingly secularized society that is sure to be emulated in this regard by the Third World (whether its model for progress stems from Marxism-Leninism or democracy), what will become of those who need religion? Will there be only the extremist religious cults for believing fanatics and the extreme activist and revolutionary causes for unbelieving fanatics? Neither Toffler nor Rifkin assigns any place in his projections to religious influence; both appear to assume that religion will simply wither away. The state has not withered away for the communists, and history does not offer precedent for the demise of religion, only of particular religions. Every intellectually responsible inquiry indicates that religion will continue to play a major

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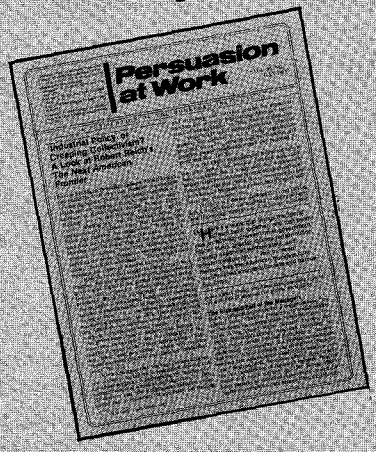

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role in the affairs of men. Rifkin, in describing the theoretical underpinnings of the synthesis he terms Algeny, provides examples of the kinds of thinking that could presumably reconcile religion with the scientific and technological cosmology that has undermined Christianity and will undermine Islam and the others. In discussing "process philosophy" he notes that Whitehead sees "every living thing" as "a small reflection of the total mind that makes up the universe." Further, Rifkin describes the new theories of biogenesis as leading directly to the idea that the universe is "a mind that oversees, orchestrates, and gives order and structure to all things." He also states that such thinking resembles current ideas about "fields" in physics. What Rifkin seems unaware of is that these ideas sound very much like a deritualized god.

Since the stormy and highly successful advance of science and technology in recent history was largely responsible for the breach between supernatural belief and the prevailing secular cosmology, it probably would require ideas from those same sources to heal that breach. Perhaps such ideas will take a form resembling that of a universal mind that arranges all things. In forging a synthesis between religion and scientific thought such concepts could lead to new and powerful theories, beliefs, and modes of perceiving the universe that could possibly satisfy mankind's spiritual yearnings. The emergence of such a force would alter, probably beyond recognition, projections such as Toffler's and Rifkin's, which do not take them into account. □

Recycling Refuse

***The Playboy Interview, Volume II;* Edited by G. Barry Golson; Wideview/ Perigee; New York.**

by Priscilla Kramer

What do Groucho Marx, Lech Walesa, Oriana Fallaci, Johnny Carson, Ted Patrick, G. Gordon Liddy, Jean-Paul Sartre, Henry Fonda, his daughter Jane and son-in-law Tom Hayden, Ed Koch, Roman Polanski, Robert Redford, Salvador Dali, William Shockley, Robert Garwood, Ayn Rand, Ian Fleming, Roone Arledge, Robert Shelton, Alex Haley, Henry Miller, Arnold Toynbee, and William F. Buckley, Jr. all have in common? At some point between 1964 and 1982, they all appeared in the pages of *Playboy,* not in the centerfold but rather in the interview section. We've all heard the old joke about the guy caught with a *Playboy* magazine who says: "I bought it to read the interview, not to look at the pictures." Now such excuses won't be necessary because the interviews have been deemed important enough to constitute a separate volume: *The Playboy Interview, Volume II.*

This book contains interviews that had to be omitted from the first volume, which included tête-à-têtes with Fidel Castro, Jimmy Carter, Albert Schweitzer, and Martin Luther King, Jr. In editor Golson's own words: "In this volume we can take the time to know historian Arnold Toynbee, racist Robert Shelton, religious deprogrammer Ted Patrick, Vietnam turncoat Robert Garwood; their names may be less familiar, but their ideas and experiences, as drawn from them by their interrogators, affected our lives and times." It seems somewhat peculiar to group Toynbee, one of the most important historians of the 20th century, with the likes of Shelton, the Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan. Or Patrick, a 10th-grade dropout, who kidnaps and "deprograms" the victims of religious cultists. Garwood left a juvenile detention center at the age of 17 to join the Marines, was sent to Vietnam, and ended up spending 14 years with the North Vietnamese, some say as a "white Vietcong" who fought against American soldiers. But perhaps Golson's grouping isn't so strange after all when one considers that Toynbee's name may be just as familiar—or unfamiliar—to *Playboy's* readers as Shelton's or Garwood's or Patrick's.

Another name the public may be unfamiliar with is that of William Shockley. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for physics for his work in creating the transistor, but he spent most of the 1960's and 1970's laboring in a different field—genetics—concerning himself with genetics as they bear on the intellectual competence of the populace. Although Shockley, unlike Klan leader Shelton, was able to make points which serve racist views in a way not easily refutable by laymen, he sounded no less stupid. Commenting on his own children vis-à-vis his genetic theories, Dr. Shockley says:

> In terms of my own capacities, my children represent a very significant regression. My first wife—their mother—had not as high an academic achievement standing as I had. Two of my three children have graduated from college—my daughter from Radcliffe and my younger son from Stanford. He graduated not with the highest order of academic distinction but in the second order as a physics major, and has obtained a Ph.D. in physics. In some ways, I think the choice of physics may have been unfortunate for him because he has a name that he will probably be unlikely to live up to. The elder son is a college dropout.

When I read this passage of the Shockley interview, I remembered having read it before. Shortly thereafter, I recalled the source. Each January, *Esquire* publishes its annual "Dubious Achievement Awards" issue, in which the editors attach sarcastic "honors" to various quotations and photographs gleaned from their competitors over the preceding year. The issue is meant to be all good fun, although the humor tends to be sophomoric. For his comment on his children, Shockley was awarded *Esquire's* "1980 Father of

Ms. Kramer works for an East Coast consulting firm.

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the Year Award."

But much of what emerges from *Playboy* interviews is taken seriously, at least by the American press corps, which passes it on to the American public. One still recalls the brouhaha surrounding Jimmy Carter's "I commit adultery in my heart" comment, published in an interview during the 1976 Presidential campaign. And some blame Mayor Ed Koch's defeat for the New York governorship on the following comment, published in the April 1982 issue: "Have you ever lived in the suburbs? . . . It's sterile . . . it's wasting your life." A barrage of press coverage followed, and the voters of the highly rural and suburban state elected Lieutenant Governor Mario Cuomo to the statehouse. That Koch also lost in New York City, which he had defended in the interview, would suggest that his remarks in *Playboy* were not wholly responsible for his defeat. On the other hand, they certainly didn't help him.

Such pearls of wisdom from *Playboy* interviews seem to turn up quite frequently in newspapers and magazines, lending credence to the plaudit cited from *Library Journal:* "[The *Playboy* interview] is a treasury of primary source material on American political and popular culture." Unfortunately, this "treasure" merely reflects our culture's muddled values and cloudy thought processes. Recalling the editor's introductory quotation, we may conclude that ours is a culture whose constituents can idolize a Toynbee or a Shelton with equal ease. And, as Golson says, it is true that people such as Shockley and Shelton have "affected our lives and times"—and will continue to do so as long as they are given such wide exposure. This is unfortunate.

Most of the people whose interviews appear in the book don't have anything particularly interesting to say, but their utterances are sometimes startling. G. Gordon Liddy, whose name is probably more familiar than that of Shelton or Shockley, reveals during his interview that he once volunteered to kill columnist Jack Anderson as retribution for Anderson's disclosing names of CIA agents. And it seems that Liddy, like Dr. Shockley, also is fascinated by genetics. Unlike Shockley, he hasn't mounted a nationwide campaign to advance his theories; rather, his application has been to his personal life:

> It had taken me a long time to build myself up from a puny, sickly child, so I wanted my own children to have a running start. That's why I determined that my smartest course was to marry a tall girl of Celtic-Teutonic ancestry who also had a terrific mind. And, as a result, I have five strong, athletic, and bright children.

We also learn that Jane Fonda and Tom Hayden fell in love and married because of their involvement in anti-Vietnam activities, that William F. Buckley favors the legalization of private homosexual acts, that Oriana Fallaci despises homosexuals, that Ayn Rand's favorite novelist is Mickey Spillane, and that Roman Polanski doesn't like women who compete with him—in short, much more than we ever wanted to know about any of them.

The accomplishment of the *Playboy* interview is that it elicits a response similar to the one evoked by the centerfold: sometimes it titillates, sometimes it shocks, sometimes it merely entertains, but finally—and mostly—it simply bores. □

LIBERAL CULTURE

The Atomic Yawn

During the 1950's and 60's, the world ended plenty of times on the screen. For example, the king of the low-budget scares and sci-fi, Roger Corman, was there with *The Day the World Ended* (a subtle title, that) in 1956 and *The Last Woman on Earth* in 1961. In 1962, not only was there *The Day the Earth Caught Fire,* but also *Panic in the Year Zero* (Ray Milland had one of his most frenetic roles in the latter). Sometimes, atomic radiation did funny things to animals—*Them!* (1954) showed giant ants that were more than a match for D-Con—or people—*The Amazing Colossal Man* (1957) and its sequel, *War of the Colossal Beast* (1958), showed a GI who became too big for his fatigues. After man landed on the moon, threat or disaster became more or less extraterrestrial, such as in *The Andromeda Strain* (1971) and *The Alpha Incident* (1977). But still, there were always the post-World War III (or IV) visions, as in the truly frightening 1971 *The Omega Man* (in which Charlton Heston could have used divine assistance) and the truly horrible *A Boy and His Dog* (1975). None of these films has been taken very seriously by any but buffs. When Spiro Agnew talked about the power of the networks, he was treated like a throwback from a prehistoric thriller. But ABC makes *The Day After* and suddenly the subject of countless B-pictures becomes the subject of special discourse, an Event, an Issue. No one put Jason Robards, star of *The Day After,* on the covers of newspapers and magazines for his role in *A Boy and His Dog.* Did anyone talk about director Nicholas Meyer when he scripted *Invasion of the Bee Girls* (1973)?

By making *The Day After,* director Meyer and his associates had loftier goals in mind: they are on record declaring that they made the movie in order to convince America of the unacceptability of nuclear weapons. Let's assume that they succeeded. So where are we now? The *other* side, which never ceases to promulgate its intention to pulverize us, seems unconvinced. It mounts formidable civil defense measures and teaches its children that atomic victory is foreordained by history, and that it will bury capitalism with H-bombs—that is, it will extinguish freedom and democracy once and forever. Isn't there something fishy in what ABC has concocted as the "vision"? Instead of hoopla, shouldn't the film have provoked a collective ho-hum? It certainly did on the day after *The Day After.* □

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COMMENDABLES

A Man Apart

George H. Nash: *The Life of Herbert Hoover: The Engineer, 1874-1914;* W. W. Norton; New York.

Jorge Luis Borges once observed that ideally—given an omniscient observer—"an indefinite, and almost infinite" number of biographies could be written about a man, including "the genealogical biography, the economic biography, the psychiatric biography, the surgical biography, the topographical biography." These and other types (e.g., the sexual biography) depicting insignificant personalities roll from the presses at an inexorable rate, multiplying the amount of trivial refuse that threatens to blanket the land. The entrepreneurs who publish the books would probably explain this situation by saying, "There's a market for biographies." That may be so, but it isn't a thorough explanation. For example, consider the story of a man who went around the world five times before airplanes were available, became an engineer, wrote about science and history, was involved in the Boxer Rebellion, helped Americans who found themselves in London when World War I began, and who was involved in many other activities, before age 40, that many of the biographical subjects of today never begin to approach. Curiously, until recently, there was no full-scale biography detailing the life of Herbert Hoover. Perhaps it is because Hoover was such a complex man, far more complicated than movie stars, rock singers, hack writers, and other current favorites. There is another possibility: Hoover's ideas about norms and values, and about economics and political philosophy, are too unlike those held by those who operate the locks controlling the flow of information. Dr. George Nash, who produced a book on another subject that many would like to ignore *(The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945),* has taken on the task of rectifying the situation with regard to Hoover. The volume at hand is the first of at least two, and perhaps three, books. It is scholarly but readable. Importantly, it shows the face of a Herbert Hoover unlike the one popularly described, that of the coldhearted engineer. Who would have ever imagined that that man "shed tears on seeing the beauty of Tintern Abbey"? □

Subtlety vs. Six-Guns

Dee Brown: *Killdeer Mountain;* Holt, Rinehart and Winston; New York.

In 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair, Frederick Jackson Turner created a landmark in American historiography by articulating his thesis that the frontier experience had produced "the forces dominating American character." Especially during the last 20 years, many historians have challenged the validity of Turner's views, arguing that European culture remained the primary influence upon American government and society. Nonetheless, movies, paintings, and books inspired by the Wild West continue to capture the popular imagination of America in a way that European art, classical or modern, rarely does, suggesting an essential correctness to Professor Turner's theory. Of course, much of Western art is superficial and historically deceptive in its portrayal of ruthless savages and laconic cowboys, of bold lawmen and desperate outlaws. Someone as intimately familiar with the realities of the Western experience as Dee Brown can craft a far richer and more complex depiction of life on the frontier, however. Like other works in its genre, *Killdeer Mountain* is a tale of romance and adventure, of cavalry and Indians. But it is far superior to most Western novels in its meticulously researched factual details and even more in the superbly intertwined ambiguities of its jigsaw narration. No shoot-out at high noon ever resolves the uncertainties surrounding his multifaceted central characters. Officially the frontier was closed in 1890, but for writers like Mr. Brown it remains open with vast possibilities. □

Exceptional Insight

Maxine Steinman: *Lights of Childhood and Other Stories;* Seaborne Press; Stafford, NH.

As a distinctively modern genre, the short story does not require any earth-straddling heroes, merely ordinary people. It does require, however, an author with extraordinary perception of how small events may reveal a spark of the transcendent—or a shadow of the fiendish—even in dry-goods clerks or grade-school teachers. Maxine Steinman was such a rare writer. In the stories posthumously collected in *Lights of Childhood,* she explores the lives of everyday characters with an ironic skepticism which sees through their fanciful hopes and petty ambitions, yet also with a warm respect for the basic decency and integrity that nonetheless dignifies their existence. She thus transforms common men and women into the uncommon stuff of art. □

IN FOCUS

Politicians of Piety

Peter Hinchliff: *Holiness and Politics;* William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.

Upon his return from conversing with God upon the top of Sinai, Moses began the work of reclaiming straying Israel by demanding, "Who is on the Lord's side?" Upon their return from ecclesiastical conferences held at somewhat lower altitudes and with rather less distinguished guest speakers, thousands of American and European clergymen are now similarly trying to reclaim their wandering flocks by posing questions. But now instead of asking their parishioners if they will worship Yahweh or a golden calf, pastors are inquiring as to who will support the liberation struggle (i.e., terrorism) rather than capitalist racism,

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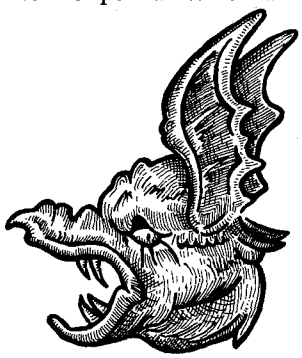
who will champion peace (i.e., disarmament) rather than nuclear buildup, and who will work for economic justice (i.e., socialism) rather than free-market inequality. Certainly, no sensible person would deny churches or pious individuals the right to bring their convictions to bear on contemporary political issues. As Peter Hinchliff, a chaplain at Balliol College, argues in *Holiness and Politics,* Christians in democracies cannot conscionably ignore politics by merely "submitting to the powers that be." As office holders and as voters, they must do their part to insure humane government. What is distressing about the current clerical emphasis on political commitment, however, is that it is often a substitute for, rather than an expression of, religious faith. The ministers chanting the political slogans and leading the demonstrations in Christ's name do not seem particularly disturbed by the fact that few in the throng that they have joined believe in or obey Him. Something is gravely wrong when churches thus respond to widespread scriptural illiteracy, declining worship, and moral and social disintegration by calling primarily for more political involvement. The only possible result of such a strategy will be not holiness *and* politics but rather a radical and degraded politics *instead* of holiness.

To his credit Mr. Hinchliff recognizes utopianism as contrary to Christian doctrine, finds liberation theology unconvincing, and warns against allowing "the pursuit of a political programme . . . to become an absolute good." Nonetheless, by refusing to take a firm stand on Christian doctrine, he renders this warning meaningless. What *is* absolute good to a chaplain who can passively observe that some theologians have "seriously questioned" the very notion of eternal salvation without unequivocally asserting his own position on the issue? Languidly acquiescing to "the process of modern secularization," Mr. Hinchliff seems far more intent upon persuading Christians to enter politics than upon converting those in politics to Christianity. Though he dismisses as "too simple" the belief that rejection of traditional Christian doctrine leads to adoption of leftist ideology, his own sympathy with left-liberal dogmas appears to owe much to his theological nonchalance. While making it quite clear that he regards capitalist America as horrid, collectivist England as wonderful, African terrorist groups as worthy of church support, and Soviet Russia as perhaps not so bad as to be opposed with nuclear weaponry, he avoids taking sides on the most fundamental of creedal questions. When, in passing, he declares that he is "closer" to those who believe in eternity than to those who do not, the reader cannot but recall King Agrippa's pathetic response to the Apostle Paul's testimony: "Almost thou persuadest me to be a



Christian." Unless the scriptural account is in error, Paul was not particularly comforted by the prospect of an almost-Christian shaping politics on the highest earthly levels. (BC) □

Mixed Drinks & False Faiths

William Kirk Kilpatrick: ***Psychological Seduction;*** Thomas Nelson; Nashville, TN.

Stephen T. Davis: ***Logic and the Nature of God;*** William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.

Nicholas Wolterstorff: ***Until Justice and Peace Embrace;*** William B. Eerdmans; Grand Rapids, MI.

To a world of parched souls, Jesus Christ offered the Water of Life. Unlike club soda, however, this Water is not a good mixer: in order to refresh, it must be taken straight, and on the Rock. For centuries, men have attempted to concoct heady new "Christianity-and-" brews, but the disappointing result is always temporary intoxication, not lasting rejuvenation. Lately, one of the most popular cocktail-cum-medicinals among the semipious is Christianity-and-psychology. William Kilpatrick, who imbibed the mix for several years, has now gone on the wagon. In his intelligent and insightful little book, he explains in terms accessible to the layman why psychology is so attractive to the modern mind, why it fails so dismally, and why unadulterated Christianity better meets human needs. Because it is made of less weighty stuff than Christianity, psychology always rises to the top, like a layer of oil, whenever the two come together. Hence, everyone without a long straw gets only psychology out of the combination, leaving him drunk yet still thirsty.

Stephen Davis's effort in *Logic and the Nature of God* is not so much one of recombination as it is of repackaging. By applying rigorous analysis to traditional doctrine, he seeks to give Christianity a clearer logical consistency and a "philosophically defensible" form. But since, as Dr. Davis concedes, the content of Christian belief is ultimately known through divine revelation and not through human syllogism, the new intellectual bottles are hardly an improvement over the old scriptural ones.

Nicholas Wolterstorff pours a few drams out of Scripture into his *Until Justice and Peace Embrace,* and the truths they contain are important: God *is* on the side of the poor, not the powerful, and profit-lust *is* a form of idolatry that leads to oppression. As too many desiccated materialists have forgotten, to be a capitalist first and a Christian second is not to be a Christian at all. But the few drops of sacred revelation Dr. Wolterstorff offers have been so diluted and perfidiously vitiated by the addition of leftist politics that they barely tinge the resultant liquor. After tipping a few at the bar of liberation theology, Dr. Wolterstorff has such blurred vision that the United States, where worship is freely expressed, and the rigidly atheistic Soviet Union are "almost indistinguishable from one another" and thus equally responsible for global suffering. His thinking, too, has become so clouded by indulgence that he blames the blight in Eastern Europe on, yes, *capitalism,* since true socialism has yet to emerge. Memory fails the besotted professor as he forgets that Jesus taught an individual righteousness impelling generosity but never sanctioned any "rights" justifying compulsory or violent wealth redistribution. His speech becomes slurred as he glides over terrorism as a

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"struggle" against "unjust social structures." He falls onto the floor in D.T.'s when censuring Israel, not the Arabs and the PLO, for violating the vision of *Shalom* given in Jewish Scripture. And doctrinal caution fades into blank stupor as he urges believers to act "fundamentally the same way" as Marxists, oblivious to the fact that Christian lambs have become mere belches when these lions have taken over. Indeed, although Dr. Wolterstorff concludes by inviting other Christians to join in the renewed devotion defined by his new synthesis, they must turn away: the cup he proffers is not a sacrament but a poison. (BC) □

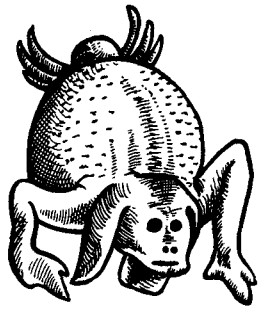
Waste of Money

Cape Cod Babble

Thomas H. Cook: *Tabernacle;*
Houghton Mifflin; Boston.

In his last novel, *The Orchids,* Mr. Cook wrote about nazis. His latest production, *Tabernacle,* concerns itself with a group of people he evidently finds just as awful: the Mormons. A resident of Cape Cod, Mr. Cook obviously hasn't spent much more time with Mormons than he had with nazis, so his portrayal of them is even more superficial and inaccurate. He does know that Mormons once denied ordination to blacks, and he's about as horrified by that as by the Holocaust. He further knows that the Latter-day Saint Church takes doctrine and institutional discipline seriously, even excommunicating on occasion, and he finds that about as depressing as what has resulted from *Mein Kampf* as a message and from Auschwitz as its materialization.

Were Mr. Cook a devout Baptist or Catholic, we might suppose that he is opposed to the specific teachings of Joseph Smith and his successors. But his quarrel with the Mormon prophets is actually a repudiation of faith itself. Like the protesters who frequently show up bearing swastikas when conservative leaders, secular or religious, are speaking, Mr. Cook evidently suspects that *all* order—moral and existential—is protofascist. His protagonist—a New York detective who has moved to Utah—believes only in "his life, all he had, and beyond which, he knew, there was nothing." This skeptical cop dislikes "the wholesome cleanliness" of Salt Lake City and longs for "a s[---] New York neighbor-



hood where everybody shot up, skinned their neighbor, and worked the streets like their own private crap game." Fighting his way through rampant fanaticism and official hypocrisy, he proves his antitranscendent goodness by being killed in the Mormon Tabernacle by the murderous Brigham Young University professor he's been trying to stop. With this revelationary conclusion, Mr. Cook, according to the dustcover, has reached "the dark heart of the Mormon faith." The book cautiously avoids speaking about any darkness of mind—mind you. □

Grenier/Comment

continued from page 5
and said to me with a strange combination of casualness and bitterness, "That's where the Russians waited while we Poles were dying." So Orwell might have overrated the ability of a totalitarian state to repress that "revolt within the skull." Perhaps it is because although most people's grasp on reality is often weak, the harshness of life in Eastern Europe has given the citizens of those states a stronger sense of the real world (and here is the paradox) than that of much of the intellectual class in the West.

But the key to it all is Orwell's "doublethink": "To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies . . . above all, to apply the same process to the process itself—that was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word 'doublethink' involved the use of doublethink." Orwell's assumption was that to produce this malfunctioning of the reasonable mind would require the efforts of an omnipotent, omnipresent, all-intrusive state. But in my extensive travels in the countries of the Warsaw Pact (admittedly long after both Orwell's and Stalin's death) I have encountered vulgar hypocrisy, obtuseness, embarrassment, lying in all its multifarious forms, and sustained bursts of honesty depending on the year and country. But I am not certain I have ever encountered doublethink. Where I encounter doublethink regularly is in the West, where large numbers of the intellectual, semi-intellectual, and pseudointellectual classes—totally uncoerced by party, state, or even public opinion but accomplishing feats of self-hypnosis—routinely give themselves over to monstrosities of doublethink. The ladies of Greenham Common, in England, have convinced themselves that if the West will only disarm, the lion will lie down with the lamb. The admirers of Jonathan Schell's *The Fate of the Earth* accept his judgment that a nuclear holocaust can be avoided only by some nebulously defined form of "world government" while a few hundred yards east of his office are the headquarters of the miserable remains of the most recent attempt at world government, the United Nations.

The predominant tone in American journalism today is persistently, if woozily, utopian. There are almost no survivors of the late Senator Jackson's school of cold-war liberalism. Nor, to be fair, are many newsmen directly under the influence of the "hard left," i.e., *The Nation* or the Socialist Workers Party or William Kunstler. Instead, with shining eyes, the media representatives look for a world without conflict, poverty, or hate, and take up a pose of contemptuous moral superiority toward those who tell them that the world is, in fact, a dangerous place, where the strong quite habitually take advantage of

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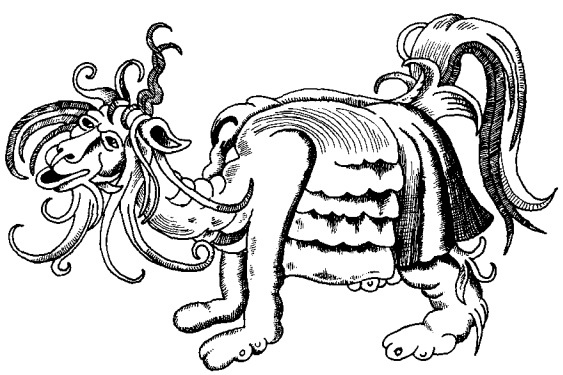
the weak, and that our government must concern itself with this reality. Now these journalists' life experiences, however limited, must have taught them *something* of the harshness of the world, as well as that total equality among human beings is a dream. In their rise in their profession they have not conducted themselves like Saint Francis of Assisi, and to my knowledge not one has ever turned down the possibility of higher financial reward. Yet in their professional pronouncements they weave fuzzily from one idealistic doctrine to another: equalitarianism, a kind of amorphous pacifism, among the more spiritually elevated even anarchism (a doctrine according to which man is "naturally good"). A woman who rose extremely high in the federally supported cultural hierarchy, and who has devoted her entire professional life to propagating such high-minded principles as equality, told me recently, having hired a chauffeured limousine to accomplish some minor errand, "My dear, there is really no substitute for money." Does equality mean that we'll all have chauffeured limousines? This I call the New Doublethink.

There has been no lack of explanations for why the intellectual classes and their hangers-on feel alienated from "bourgeois" society. Many used to say it was produced by resentment, because bourgeois society didn't honor them (although this is becoming threadbare these days, when leading contemporary cultural figures get longer entries in encyclopedias than secretaries of state). Some feel the alienation is produced by a lust for power: who are these ignorant businessmen and politicians to run the country when the intelligentsia, so learned, so wise, does not? (With so many intellectuals, academics, and graduates of elite liberal-arts universities high in the councils of government, this, too, in my view, is wearing thin.) A persuasive explanation given by Max Weber is that intellectuals—less rational than they view themselves—cannot give their allegiance to a society whose ultimate and sublime values have been withdrawn. And we also have the "pathology of affluence" and the "society of dependence," both of which explain a growing irresponsibility of action and thought.

But the quintessence of irresponsibility in thought is doublethink: calmly, complacently, smugly, to hold two totally contradictory thoughts in one's head at the same time. To know that they are contradictory, and yet not know. To say things one does not believe, and yet to hypnotize oneself into thinking that one does believe them. To know that the weak must yield to the strong, and yet by self-hypnosis to convince oneself that the Kingdom of God is somehow come, and that righteousness rules the earth.



1984 is a wonderful, fiercely anticommunist book. Every twist and turn in it is a warning, heightened imaginatively, of the horrors of communist society. Orwell's special horror, the intellectual key necessary to make the whole thing work, was doublethink. And yet here 1984 is upon us.

It is perhaps among members of the "hard left" that some of the most striking adepts of the New Doublethink are to be found. Noam Chomsky, a Jew, recently leaped zealously to the defense of a French historian who claimed that Auschwitz and the Final Solution had never taken place and were fabrications of Allied propaganda (presumably this was out of hostility to Israel, which is pilloried systematically by the Soviet Union). Furthermore, Professor Chomsky (a linguist) leaves no doubt whatever, from his violent hatred of the United States and his elaborate apologetics in defense of regimes of the totalitarian left, that he would desire such a left-totalitarian regime for this country. But what role would Professor Chomsky occupy in such a regime? One senses a craving for power here and suspects that in one part of his mind, at least, Professor Chomsky sees himself as Minister of Culture, or Minister of Education, or perhaps even, with his gifts, Minister of Defense or Public Welfare or Central Economic Planning in such a new order. In another part of his mind, however, Professor Chomsky cannot help but know that, according to Lenin's dictum, there is "no limit to the power of the state" in such regimes, and that they invariably fall under the control of brutal men who have a far greater aptitude for operating in lawless societies than Professor Chomsky—who, after all, has had all his success under governments assuring the liberties he so despises.

So if in one part of his brilliant mind Professor Chomsky is dreaming of traveling by government limousine accompanied by police motorcade and deciding the destiny of some New America, in another part of that same mind he must know that he would have an excellent chance of ending up in the basement of Boston's Charles Street Prison with a bullet in the nape of his neck. But Noam Chomsky, free, unconstrained by the power of any omnipotent state, does not seem to think much about that. "Unconscious," as Orwell wrote, "of the act of hypnosis he has performed," he labors tirelessly to establish a regime that would be quite likely to exterminate him. It's the New Doublethink.

—Richard Grenier

Mr. Grenier writes film criticism for Commentary.

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Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen

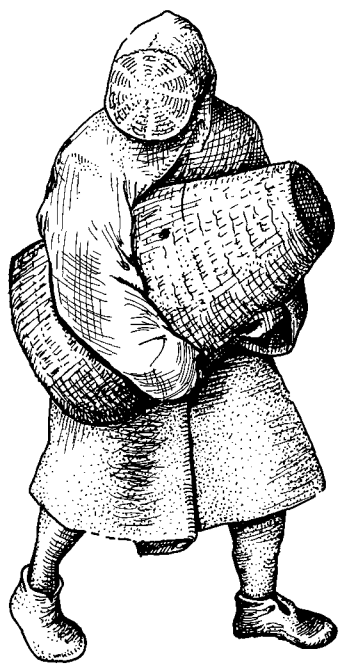
***Zelig;* Written and directed by Woody Allen; Orion Pictures/Warner Brothers.**

by Stephen Macaulay

I want to get out while I still can
I want to be like Harry Houdini
Now I'm the Invisible Man.
—Elvis Costello

In *Reds,* writer-director-producer-actor and all-around polymathic performing pygmy Warren Beatty felt that he could achieve veracity in his untellable, tedious tale of John Reed and his Amazon queen by interrupting the stretched-out people's polyester saga with "real" personages who knew Jack when. It was all so aboveboard, a cut above mere moviemaking—or at least it was supposed to have been. It wasn't quite a documentary, though it had certain aspirations, or pretentions, in that direction, just as fictions by E. L. Doctorow try to crawl into the history category. Beatty not only used Woody Allen's Annie Hall in *Reds,* but he also appropriated the interview technique from the 1969 *Take the Money and Run,* or so it seems. At least the near-and-dear in the Allen film had the good taste to wear fake mustaches, noses, and glasses during their interviews with the camera. Allen has now put Beatty into the proper perspective. Just as *Reds* began snatching up hours of air time on HBO, *Zelig* appeared. The bathetic high seriousness of rheumy weepers remembering John, dear John, are paralleled by people like Susan Sontag, Irving Howe, and Saul Bellow, who, with the proper mock seriousness, discuss one Leonard Zelig, a man who was committed only to *his* safety in mass society, which was manifest by his complete blending into any given environment (i.e., his physical appearance changed so that he would become fat, black, Oriental, etc., depending on the setting). Allen has regularly punctured overinflated intellects by pointing out that there is a distinct difference between knowledge and hot air (vide Marshall McLuhan in *Annie Hall*); Beatty doesn't recognize it. John Reed wanted to turn the world on its head; Leonard Zelig wanted the world to leave him alone. Both are ridiculous figures. (Reed, of course, was a real man, whereas Zelig is from Allen's imagination. But the Academy Award Reed is no more genuine than Zelig.) Another difference between *Reds* and *Zelig* is that while Beatty became so carried away with himself (he, naturally, played Reed) that his film is both chronologically and subjectively endless, as if he fancied himself an Eisenstein, Allen knows that brevity is the soul of wit. Unfortunately, always-put-upon Woody has a touch of the showboat in him.

In an otherwise unremarkable 1982 film, *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid,* director Carl Reiner had his protagonist, a detective, interact with figures in clips from 1940's American *film noir* features. Thus, Steve Martin confronted Humphrey Bogart. It was generally well done: it meshed and few edges showed. Allen does much the same thing in *Zelig:* Fanny Brice serenades Zelig, and Calvin Coolidge and Herbert Hoover pose with him. Newsreel footage is used instead of movie clips. Zelig, of course, is the typical Allen character, one who makes Chaplin's Tramp look like a *mensch,* so the juxtaposition of the nobody with the somebodies is, in itself, amusing. The camera work and the film processing and postprocessing are the real "stars." While *Zelig* is technically more sophisticated than *Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid,* that isn't particularly remarkable in this post-*Tron* age.



What is Woody Allen's point? Certainly *Zelig* is a "serious" film, especially as compared with *Take the Money and Run, Dead Men Don't Wear Plaid,* and even *Reds.* But when the doctored Pathé news shots are ignored and the wonderful blending process is overlooked, there is little to it. *The Three Faces of Eve* and *Sybil* (she had 16 personalities) address the problem of some individuals' responses to mass society, showing that while the title characters are individuals, they are also aberrant with regard to normative living. *Zelig* is nothing more than a sort of tribute to Peter Sellers. Clouseau invariably cracks the case; Zelig and his doctor ("It's all in the mind," she staunchly maintains, puffing away like a figure in an Eve cigarette ad) live happily ever after. Given the real nature of multiple personality disorders, the film, though it may be funny, is not unlike a dirty joke: at base, distasteful. Allen, like Beatty, went too far. Zelig is charged with a paternity suit. Initially, this seems like a barbed comment about one of the dangers of being a celebrity: such put-up jobs happen all the time. But as it turns out, Zelig is the husband of several women and the father of numerous children. He publicly apologizes to a family, explaining that he'd never pretended to be an obstetrician

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before encountering them and so thought (perhaps with a nod to *Tristram Shandy's* Dr. Slop) that ice tongs were a proper birthing instrument. If *Zelig* is to be taken as something other than a long sight-gag, then it isn't serious but intellectually sleazy—and perhaps even that adverb is too kind.

This didn't have to be the case. Had Allen not gone wandering in search of a point—one that he never reaches, anyway—and pared the film to no more than 45 or 50 minutes, it would have been a far superior work, both technically (the trick photography does become tiresome) and intellectually (i.e., it would be a devastating indictment of the notion of celebrity or of conformity American-style, in which one can become what he wishes to be). However, this would result in the problem of classifying it as a "feature film." Allen obviously wants to be something more than a comedian, to make observations about man's condition in the final phases of the 20th century; he seems to want to be taken as a sophisticated filmmaker—and he often seems to be on the brink of becoming one. Such a filmmaker goes with whatever length is suited to his concept; a sculptor doesn't make a statue bigger than life-sized simply so more people can see it. Padding, which is always evident in *Zelig*, causes its messages to become diffuse—and defused. Certainly commercial considerations play an important role, but those are to be taken care of by the business people, who could undoubtedly come up with various marketing and screening alternatives. For example, multiscreened theaters are proliferating; some of them have 11 or more screens. Given their quantitative requirements, they regularly show films that are a year or more old, and not as a second feature. A perfect pairing for *Zelig* would be *Reds*. *Zelig* could start at a time that would coincide with *Reds'* intermission. *Zelig* would be, properly, packed. □

Once Upon a Time in the West Coast

Robert Phillip Kolker: *The Altering Eye: Contemporary International Cinema;* Oxford University Press; New York.

A cultural paradigm should be a positive one, an object that, through its very being, encourages emulation. If that model is a man or woman, a hero or a heroine, then that person should, at all visible times and in all apparent ways (i.e., let's acknowledge privacy as a personal need, *People* and *National Enquirer* to the contrary), be the type of person that others *want* to become, both for themselves and for the good of the community. One of the reasons why ours seems to be an age without heroes is simply because there is a common predilection, or programmatic approach, to emphasize the warts and other blemishes: somehow it is more exciting or sexy or enticing to have a drug problem or lovers and ex-mates or a wholly sick life-style (did anyone have a *life-style* in the pre-20th century world?) than to be the type of good, well-rounded, steady individual that was admired through the ages. Another reason may be that in order to be the latter kind of person—*staid* would be the modern denigrating adjective—one must be not only decorous but also responsible, and that is no simple feat. To snort cocaine and then to deport oneself like a lower primate in heat is, presumably, a simpler task. This is not so much the Age of Ego as it is the Age of Ease.

Cultural paradigms are not necessarily people. They are often institutions, organizations that help shape people to abide productively within their given culture. Think only of small things like the Girl and Boy Scouts, groups that encourage young people to strive to do more than to become proficient with boom-boxes and make-up cases, objects of veneration for many American youths. Certainly, the scouting organizations seem rather insignificant with regard to the cultural milieu, but that is simply a distortion, one caused by the ubiquity of the vapid teenagers touted in *Rolling Stone* and on the covers of high-fashion magazines. To be "cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent" is to be out in an indulgent world; fortunately, the paradigm remains.

One institution that is unquestionably evident and pervasive is the American cinema. As Robert Phillip Kolker writes in *The Altering Eye*, an examination of post-World War II filmmaking in (primarily) Europe:

> The presence of American cinema is a constant, and there is no filmmaker I know of, even the most revolutionary, who hates American film. Intellectual arguments are marshalled against it; the emotions always respond to it.

"American film," of course, means "Hollywood," and when pre-World War II Hollywood is considered, men like Ford and Hawks (born 1895 and 1896, respectively), men who firmly established themselves in that period, show why European and Latin American directors looked—and look—to that land of yore. Rossellini, Godard, Roeg, Fassbinder, and others Kolker examines, while not exactly making films that can be admired, are working in a manner that can be respected. *Working* is the key word, for whether they are making some semi-philosophical statement or typically leftist political point, they are applying themselves, striving to make films, perhaps even trying to push the cinematic art forward. The same cannot be said of innumerable contemporary American directors who are now cranking out footage that exists not for the sake of the feature itself, but for the sound track (e.g., *Flashdance, Staying Alive*). Will Hollywood endure? If it is considered as an industry, then the answer is yes—assuming that its managers, like their

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counterparts in automotive and steel, can contain the costs. If Hollywood is considered as a cultural paradigm, then the answer is an unequivocal no. Certainly, some directors—Coppola, Lucas, Spielberg—are working, but they can't carry the freight of responsibility alone. Film as art is to convey meaning about life, to say how to live. At least that's the way it once was. Should the present course be maintained, then it's critical that the Boy Scouts endure: there will be more than a few who are unable to cross a street unattended. (SM) □

MUSIC

First-Timers & Second Stringers

by Robert R. Reilly

"Movie music!" is the exclamation of recognition that newcomers often make upon first hearing classical music. They seem as delighted with this discovery as was Molière's Middle-Class Gentleman when he realized he had been speaking prose all his life. One tries not to wince noticeably when explaining to a neophyte that William Tell rode long before the Lone Ranger galloped along to Rossini's overture. However, there is a lot of "classical" music that could be suitably demoted to "movie music" status. The lesser tone poems, much program music, and a great deal of late-19th-century mush all have the same consistency as movie scores and hold one's attention about as well. Ballet music sans ballet, except for the very greatest, can also easily escape concentrated appreciation.

This thought is brought to mind by the London digital release (LDR 71028) of a new recording of Ravel's ballet *Daphnis et Chloé* (1912) performed by Charles Dutoit and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra. Unlike a great number of listeners, I find the ballet unnervingly vapid. Wordless choirs singing away, harp glissandi, flute melodies twittering about—one might think even Hollywood would be embarrassed were it not for the fact that it has endlessly replicated this kind of music. I should add that its advocates describe this music as "shimmering," and I am sure they would be pleased with this performance and recording.

Another orchestral favorite by which I am not swept away is Saint-Saëns' *Third Symphony,* his famous organ symphony. Saint-Saëns at his most serious is not Saint-Saëns at his best. He took music to be a matter of "elegant lines, harmonious colours and a pleasing succession of harmonies," and demonstrated that this was so in his delightful piano concerti and chamber music. But when Saint-Saëns takes on the Germanic weightiness and romantic seriousness of making a *major statement,* he cannot ultimately carry it off. The surface excitement is there but the undergirding substance isn't. He comes close, though, through dint of his expert craft. This is very good second-echelon music, and it is performed to the hilt by Herbert Von Karajan and the Berlin Philharmonic in a new Deutsche Grammaphon digital recording (2532 045) that conveys all the excitement and grand gestures.

Another enjoyable, if not overwhelming, second-echelon piece has received its world premier recording from London records (Digital LDR 71037). Edvard Grieg apparently did not feel that this, his one and only *Symphony,* was up to snuff; after several performances he withdrew the work and wrote on the cover of the score: "Must never be performed." His wishes were honored for 113 years, until Karsten Andersen and the Bergen Symphony resurrected it for the temporal eternity of the phonograph record. Why Grieg chose to suppress this perfectly respectable work is a bit of a mystery. One is all the more surprised to learn this mature and confident-sounding symphony came from a 20-year-old as his first completed orchestral score. Grieg denigrated this 1864 composition as belonging to "a bygone Schumann period" of his life. Indeed, it would be hard to detect any personal stamp of Grieg's later genius in this work, but those who enjoy middle-stream romanticism of the Schumann type should find modest enjoyment here. The recording sounds fine but now has competition from a highly

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praised BIS album of the same work.

A feat similar to Grieg's, and in the same general stylistic vein, was performed by his contemporary Arthur Sullivan (of Gilbert and Sullivan fame) who in 1863 at the age of 21 wrote his only symphony, the *Symphony in E Minor (The Irish)*. This work provides mild pleasure and, though hardly a masterpiece, is more than a mere curiosity. As with Grieg, one wonders why, with such fine results, Sullivan did not pursue the symphonic form. The Musical Heritage Society has done what it does best, making available this out-of-the-way work in a good recording of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Sir Charles Groves (MHS 4595). The record is filled out with Sullivan's *Overture "Di Ballo."* It sounds quite operatic in the sprightly idiom of Rossini with a few dance steps from Strauss.

There is now available singly Beethoven's *Symphony No. 7* from Leonard Bernstein's highly acclaimed complete set of Beethoven's symphonies with the Vienna Philharmonic Deutsche Grammaphon (2531 313). Richard Wagner called this symphony "the very apotheosis of the dance," possibly because each of its four movements is based on a different rhythmic pattern, but this is not the dancing of mortals, nor is it dainty. The power of rhythmic drive here is tremendous; this is a masterwork. This new DGG issue adds to the dilemma of selecting from well over 30 available recordings of this work. *Fanfare* magazine dispels the problem by declaring that this performance is "the finest Beethoven seventh of our time," and even "a Beethoven seventh for the ages." Well, *de gustibus...*, I do not find it to be that decisive a triumph over its predecessors, and in fact I prefer Von Karajan's first DGG recording. His tighter pace keeps a greater sense of rhythmic excitement. Bernstein has excellent attention to detail, though, along with fine sound and a stunning finale. But then there is Kleiberth's overwhelming performance—and Toscanini's. □

Do, Re, Me, Me, Me

Ned Rorem: *Setting the Tone: Essays and a Diary;* Coward-McCann; New York.

Ned Rorem is a composer. And a Pulitzer Prize (1976) winner at that. He is also his own favorite subject: listed among his titles are *The Paris Diary of Ned Rorem,* with which he started his career as a writer in 1966, and *The New York Diary* (not *A*), both of which will soon see fresh ink. The diary portion accounts for about one-third of the present volume, but whether he is dealing with Stravinsky or The Beatles, writing for *Opera News* or *Christopher Street,* the subject is still, essentially, one Ned Rorem. Joyce Carol Oates figures that there are "really two 'Ned Rorems,'" and Rorem does, too: "Gradually, like amoebas merging and then separating, or like two Ned Rorems passing each other as they enter a mirror..." But one is enough. After all, is it possible to imagine one man who is split in two who is totally self-centered? Even bona fide clones, presumably, have differing self-interests.

Music, of course, can indicate something of the composer's personality and can be characterized by noting specific traits. But only in language is the first-person singular so obvious. In "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Critic" Rorem writes: "1. Critics of words use words. Critics of music use words. Those thirteen syllables, penned a decade ago, are as pertinent as any I can make on the matter." The 40 syllables pivot on the "I" who thinks that his private jottings require public notice while he can still produce more of them. In the piece from which he takes his title he writes: "To reread my diary is to cringe. Yet I hold to every banal word, and am forever governed by a distaste for the serious." Unserious banalities, then, are the essence of Rorem's remarks, yet they are presented as if they are to be savored, not savaged. Part of the reason for this is that Rorem slinks through the right milieu, one *People*'d with celebrities. He, too, is something of a celeb, but he is more. Celebrities tend to have a public persona that's distinct from their private lives (at least one hopes that they do). But Rorem will have none of that; he will not cordon off any area of his number-one subject. He is Public Person Nonpareil. (SM) □

THE AMERICAN PROSCENIUM

What Happened?

In the days after the Beirut massacre of October 1983 both the print and electronic media went into their instant business of interviewing. People's most frequent reaction to the reporters' questions was in the form of a question: "Why are we, that is the Marines, there in the first place?" Of course, a phalanx of officials, politicians, and pundits tried to explain it; the more they exerted themselves, the less sense their explanations made—to us, at least. Their televised and op-ed page excogitations fell, generally, into three categories:

—the Administration and moderate, so-called pragmatic Republicans claim that we are there to bring peace to Lebanon, to support there a pro-Western government that is committed to the same goal;

—Democrats from left to right maintain that we are there because of the dismal ineptness of Reagan and his advisers;

—the international left, from U.S. "peace" activists to Andropov, clamors that we are there to further the agenda of American imperialism and keep the benign, blissful Soviet influence away from the area.

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All three explications sound like bunk to us. We have our own explanation, and its reasoning goes much further back than any of the preceding ones.

After World War I, some British strategists and intelligence operatives—T. E. Lawrence prominent among them—decided that the sons of the desert had performed beautifully for the Allied cause against the Turks; they concluded that their romantic valor could be converted into political support for the West in the Middle East. Two decades later, the Arab world was studded with Hitler's admirers, and during World War II the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem organized Arab military units that fought for the Axis. Yet, a sentimental proclivity for the Arabs not only survived in the Foreign Office, but also has spread to the State Department, and is tenderly flourishing in the big oil corporations. After the last war, a new factor emerged: the fledgling state of Israel. Ever since, an implacable and nonnegotiable hatred against Israel has qualified, motivated, and governed every Arab political movement and initiative—be it radical or conservative in character. Those in the British and American foreign-policy establishments who, more or less overtly, supported mindless Arab emotionalism were called "Arabists," but they preferred to call themselves "pragmatists": Arabs, they maintained, number several hundred million, possess invaluable raw resources, and to alienate them by not giving them whatever they wish means Western suicide. Those who supported Israel pointed to the fact that Israel, with which we share a common civilizational heritage, could evolve into a superior political force whose impact on and expertise in the region might prove much more valuable to the West than demographic and material factors—they were called "idealists." Presidents Eisenhower and Carter were typical "pragmatists"; Truman and Nixon, not especially noted for their ardor for Jews, whether in Haifa or the Bronx, were "idealists." History has proved the idealists right. Israel did become a rarity among statehoods and societies in the modern world: democratic, staunchly pro-Western, and militarily efficient all at once. When nazism vanished as an adored exemplar, most Arab military regimes extended their warmest sympathies to the Soviet Union—the West's principal challenger and enemy on the global scene. But a fondness for the Islamic cultural image, combined with the love for Saudi Arabia's billions and the hope of fabulous corporate profits

from dealing with whoever can provide macrodividends, caused American "Arabists" and "pragmatists" to multiply, in spite of all factual and reasonable evidence that an "evenhanded," that is pro-Arab, policy is not of benefit to us.

In 1982 Israel, prompted by a strategic necessity of self-defense, freed Lebanon from the Syrian-sponsored PLO occupation, thus delivering the country back to Western influence. At the behest of "Arabists" at the State Department, and "pragmatic" Republicans in his White House entourage, President Reagan—an "idealist" by instinct and earlier ideological allegiance—somehow under pressure from the international left's campaign against Israel's "imperialist cruelties" (exerted chiefly by the U.S. liberal press), reversed his position on the Middle East and sent the Marines to Beirut. By doing this, he thwarted Israel's victory, impaired the accomplishment of its final objectives, saved the remnants of the PLO, preserved the Syrian positions in a large part of Lebanon, and disdained all Israeli advice on how to proceed in the hellish cauldron of Lebanese-Arab factional politics. Soon, we saw Marines brandishing their pistols at Israeli soldiers (who simply knew better where to look for snipers) and being praised for their "resolve" by Secretary Weinberger, the Administration's chief "Arabist," "pragmatist," and Saudi Arabia spokesman. Thus, the Israelis, who are not convinced that Lebanon can be preserved as a political entity without a war with Syria, withdrew from the center of the struggle. The Marines stayed. Their presence, to our mind, symbolizes the Western concept of how to deal with the Middle Eastern imbroglio without knowing who wants what, why, and at what price. The Lebanese government, which the Marines are supposed to protect, is weak, corrupt, treacherous, and utterly unreliable—in itself living proof that the state of Lebanon, as a legal framework for diverse groups constantly at each other's throats, is no longer a viable and feasible proposition. To many it seems, therefore, that we have resigned ourselves to losing young lives there without firing a shot because the "Arabists" and "pragmatists" who shape this administration's Middle Eastern policies and manipulate its alliances and "friendships" will never admit their expediency, irresponsibility, and bungling. Their careers are at stake.

This is why we were in Beirut on that fatal October day. □

Gott Strafe England!

Voices are heard from the British Islands that are highly critical of Mr. Reagan's decision to do something about that other little island—Grenada. Let us take a brief peek at what for the last two centuries has been called in history books the perfidy of Albion. Once it was a

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world calamity, but today it seems more like the annoying fuming of a has-been.

Mrs. Thatcher, a lady rather admired on these shores, quite vehemently scolded the U.S. for its actions. Grenada is formally a member of the British Commonwealth, so it would be natural that, when the Queen's own governor is practically imprisoned by Marxist-Leninist gangsters, the kingdom would do something about it—not to mention that the neighboring islands, also Commonwealth members, implored Britain for protection. But Britain, a sclerotic lion that knows the limits to which she can taunt a very robust and equally unpredictable bear, chose to do nothing. Once Reagan had made it clear that he is not overly concerned about the bear's sensitivities, some British conservatives made snide remarks that his move was intended to boost his domestic political fortunes—a stance that deserves moral censure. Suddenly, what happened in elections subsequent to the Tories' own little war in the Falklands was conveniently forgotten, as was our not-so-tacit support for our British "cousins" that has cost us a lot of Latin American good will.

The London press scornfully reprimanded us on the freedom-of-the-press issue: no correspondent was allowed to accompany the American task force in the Caribbean. No mention was made of the fact that Mrs. Thatcher, during the Falkland enterprise, permitted the British media to photograph only the Union Jack flying proudly from the warships and smiling faces of embarking patriotic paratroopers. Anyone who lived through Vietnam will recall how *our* media interviewed enemy propagandists and how much footage, or column inches, *they* were given in our press.

For many years prior to World War I, Britain and her royalty projected a most tender love for the Kaiser's Germany. Then it went to war on the side of France and Czarist Russia, and angry Germans carried placards that read "God Punish England!" during street demonstrations. We do not ask God for retribution. But we do suggest that, having lost an empire, Britain could now relax a bit and afford both a sense of shame and a sense of fairness. □

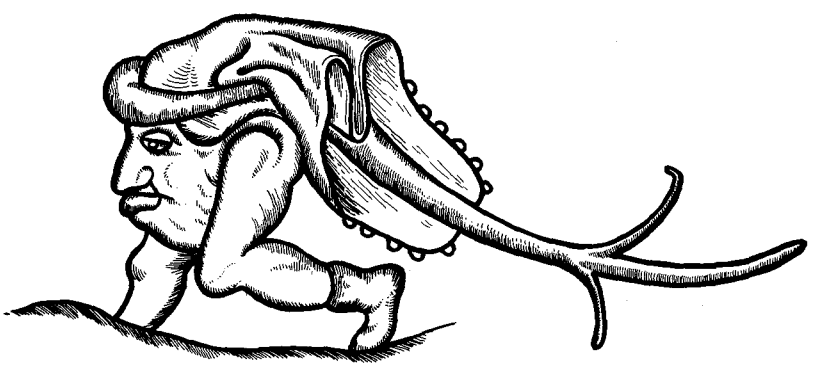
Ship of Fools

The debate on how to render America impotent has reached orgasmic intensity. Suddenly, everybody sees atomic war just around the corner; the conventional liberal media are organizing giant scare campaigns (in the name of the people's right to know), while the radicals, the professional freezeniks, the regular pro-Moscow troops, and all the incorporated communist-front enterprises accuse the liberal media of anti-internationalism—that is, of an inability to play in a Soviet-orchestrated arrangement as they do so successfully.

Faced with the news that the Russians had hydrogen bombs, Winston Churchill said that henceforth the very concept of defense was fundamentally altered. True enough, but this keen insight did not obliterate Clausewitz's more venerable truth—that war is politics by another means. Only the acceptance of the theorized, calculated, and conjectural premise that an atomic war is unwinnable under any circumstances negates Clausewitz's principle and eliminates war as a means to defend the basic institutions on which America was erected and still stands as a superior social entity. For if it is true that no war in our epoch can actually end in a victory, then America is doomed. This verity means that a democracy, a pluralistic state, and a free society must perish. The reasons for this gloomy inference are pure, simple, and mercilessly unequivocal.

The idea of détente, as it was crystallized in the supersmart minds of its conceptualists, was quite optimistic in nature. It assumed that, during a historically protracted period of nonbellicosity, our moral superiority, political attractiveness, and economic efficiency would impress the Soviet society to such an extent that that society would eventually begin to exert pressure on its leadership, and that such a process could positively shape the world's future. Thus, any concession short of appeasement and surrender made sense. Such cheerful credulity resulted in the unleashing of Soviet-sponsored terrorist activities on an unheard-of scale, then in an open invasion of Afghanistan, then in the massacre of a nascent freedom in Poland. We now confront a behemoth totalitarian and military power committing outrages that once would have qualified as acts of war, but we cannot respond properly for we may trigger a war, which is a priori unwinnable. So—if we are disallowed from waging even a justified war in defense of our very existence—what are our other options?

One is that an armed conflict with the Soviet Union will be replaced with a propaganda war, which we would certainly lose. In such a war, lies are the most potent weapon. For example: the Soviet Ministry of Truth could tell Russians that



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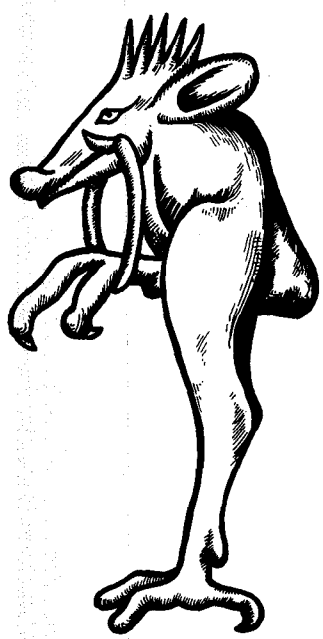
canned pet food in America is made out of shredded black South African babies. We would have no means to refute this, as *theirs* is a closed totalitarian society—and the Soviet citizens have believed even more aberrant fabrications. What's worse is that we cannot even convince our own citizens of the factual horrors of communism. We have a free press whose major goal seems to be demolishing anything—right or wrong—our government has to say. To reach the Soviet citizenry in order to tell them what's real and true via our communications media is about as feasible as setting up a *New York Times* bureau on Venus. Our press, in fact, does everything possible to persuade us that the nuclear war is unwinnable, but it is unable to convey the same message behind the Iron Curtain. Russian citizens are at the mercy of their leaders' pronouncements: that the Korean airliner was on a spy mission, that any imperialist violation of their sacred frontiers will be crushed by the invincible atomic rocketry that is so proudly displayed each year in Red Square. A vision of the Stars & Stripes flying over the Kremlin as a result of a propaganda war would seem ridiculous to Americans; the idea of a hammer and sickle banner over the White House is, to many Russians, a conceivable possibility, maybe just a matter of time. And otherwise rational Western societies are willing to accept the assertion that we are feeding babies to pets rather than risk Soviet wrath and an "unwinnable" nuclear exchange.

A democratic society is by nature an informed and debating society. As such, it can be indoctrinated by even the flimsiest efforts. It can, therefore, be *convinced* about the need for personal sacrifice, but never coerced into it. The more doubt and reflection that takes place, the less likelihood of sacrifice—regardless of all persuasive exertions. In contrast, all of Soviet society is structured on enforced sacrifice. The word "sacrifice" is synonymous with the very process of living. In such a reality, the winnability or unwinnability of atomic war is meaningless. In our pluralistic and individualistic reality it somehow looks as if we are aboard Sebastian Brant's *Ship of Fools:* its crew endlessly pursues a miraculous, utopian "agreement" that would eliminate the specter of unwinnable war from global political affairs so that everybody would rejoice in peace. No one thinks about the reality of other struggles. Do we have a contingency plan for confronting the Soviets in a war of ideologies, systems, ways of life—a war that will not disappear from our forced coexistence? May we rest assured that an overwhelming majority of our nation would approve such a plan to talk and act in unison, in order to lend credibility to our resolve?

In a well-meant but rather simplistic utterance at a recent press conference, President Reagan expressed the thought that we should invite here as many representatives of the new nations as possible: they would see how democracy works and how representation through the ballot makes societies better. He wanted to teach them about elections. But they know about elections. What the President seems not to realize is that a society ordered according to a communal principal is not a teachable concept: it must grow out of civilizational tradition. Japan or Taiwan or Singapore could accept our political mechanisms (but not sociocultural ways) because deep down within the cultures of those nations the philosophical preconditions for those mechanisms existed. Tanzania, Saudi Arabia, or the Andean republics—that's something else. Teaching them democracy is not the same as acquainting their populations with refrigerators. Besides, there is still that bizarre warp in our own public opinion: liberal congressmen and the media, so eager to train a Somoza, or a Shah, somehow keep mum about the idea of educating an Andropov or a Jaruzelski. They would deem such a notion both ridiculous and improper. This is why if proper understanding of current affairs fails us, we will lose the world struggle. In the end, we will take our ship of fools apart, with our own hands, when cruising over the deepest and most turbulent abyss. □



Methodology

Once again (though it is only the second time), there is a black contender for the Presidency—and it is a glorious moment, for it shows that we are true to ourselves in that we are living up to the most intrinsic promises of our free society, pluralistic democracy, and the Constitution—the sources of all our strengths. The momentousness of this moment, however, is slightly marred by a feeling that, perhaps, Rev. Jesse Jackson is ill-suited to bear the standard of the last stage of emancipation. Rev. Jackson belongs to that breed of social activists which was engendered by the 1960's; as such he confuses rage with strength. But rage is *not* strength. Historically, candidates for the American Presidency have based their bids on the force of their ideas, arguments, reasoning, explication. Thus, we think that it's unfortunate that blacks may see as their spokesman, one anointed by hope and extraordinariness, a person who believes more in the power of the scream and frenzy than in that of clear statement and calm judgment. □

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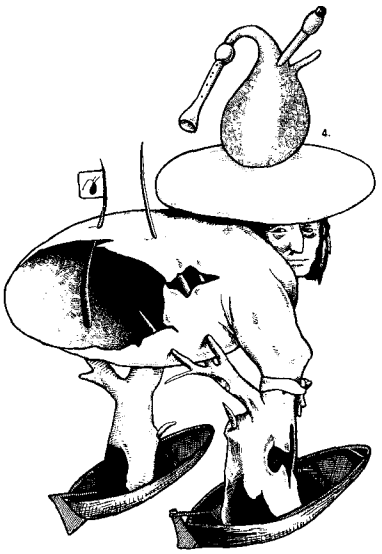
Syndicated King Lear

The jeremiads were not devoid of a certain poignancy. Anchormen and columnists filled their "spaces," both the psychological ones and those allocated to them during the prime time or on editorial pages,with outbursts of the most righteous anger witnessed since Lancelot went on rampage and King Lear filled theaters with the outrage of sorrow. The reason: they were not allowed to land on Grenada with the U.S. forces. "Those are *our* soldiers, the people's soldiers," went the lamentations, "and the people have the right to know what happens to them. And who else is destined by God, Constitution, and immutable laws of history to make people know other than the American journalist—the paladin of the First Amendment? The government's assertion that it wished to protect newspeople from the perils of battle is absurd and does not hold up in the light of the American military history, which is replete with tales of reporters who were killed in action."

While the latter charge is true, and the circumstances of journalistic valor are heartwarming in a nostalgic vein, something happened between the death of Ernie Pyle and the liberation of Grenada. During that time, the American soldier of every rank, rightly or wrongly, acquired a strange, often oppressive impression that although the American journalist may not be on the enemy's side, he is not exactly on the soldier's side, either. While it is difficult to formulate the reasons why this is so in a few sentences, it is apparent that the feeling reached its climax in Vietnam. The bitter complaints about the Administration's handling of the press during the Grenada crisis actually bared the sickly affliction that, for the last two decades, contaminates the relationship between American society and the freest press on the planet.

The litany of dangerously vicious inanities which followed the Administration's decision may well begin with that of a doltish female CBS correspondent



who, after President Reagan's first press conference on Grenada, felt personally abused by the President. She concluded that Mr. Reagan lied to her: he initially announced that he sent troops to save American lives; he subsequently noted that a Cuban menace existed (one that CBS News was unable to check in advance). The reflection that Mr. Reagan could have had the double objective of saving lives *and* annihilating the Cuban threat, and perhaps, had some other goals (like restoring a legitimate government to Grenada), and that *all* those objectives may have been equally valid (but not communicated to CBS at the network's schedule) never oppressed the lady's mind. She held the President guilty of misinformation.

However, she still has a way to go before she will reach the level of sophisticated chutzpah of her colleague, Mr. Walter Cronkite, the TV icon of phony bonhomie, who intoned:

> This nation is founded on the belief that people have the right to know and that we participate in our government's actions. . . . These are our Marines, our Rangers down there. This is our foreign policy and we have a right to know precisely what is happening, and there can be no excuse in denying the people that right.

We were always persuaded that *our* foreign policy is that of the President and the Congress, both duly elected according to the principles of representative democracy. If we do not like the kind of foreign policy the constitutionally mandated powers pursue, we vote them out of office. Actually, Mr. Cronkite's whining is at the center of the disease which might grow tumorlike into the flesh of the American civilization: the Cronkites and other press overlords seem to believe that the First Amendment is not a warrant for free expression, but for dictating, forming, and superimposing upon the government and the nation a policy deemed right by them. We thus have in the press the nonelected rulers who, in the best imperial tradition, claim that they have "their" Rangers and "their" Marines—like the Queen's Own Rifles. Mr. Cronkite conveniently forgets that *his* network is involved in a legal contention with a soldier, General Westmoreland, who accuses it of lying and until now has not been proven wrong. We know a gentleman in Connecticut who, during the Vietnam War, used to pass a clean piece of fabric over his TV screen each time after Mr. Cronkite's image had appeared on it. "I'm wiping off lies from my appliance," he noted, adding, "It's a purification reflex."

In the mourning rites, Mr. Cronkite was joined by Mr. Henry Grunwald, the lord of the *Time-Life Inc.* fiefdom who, in a more conciliatory and sober tone, tried to turn the tables around and prove that the exclusion of the press was not the President's sin ("In many ways he is the most open President we have had in a long time"), but someone else's, one who did "a real disservice to Ronald Reagan." Yet, in an essay, Mr. Grunwald couldn't resist forming a sentence that strikes us as even more mendacious than insidious:

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> The press has a serious quasi-constitutional function as a representative of the public.

One does know how to politely react to this kind of imperial usurpation. We do not recall making *Time* our representative in *any* area of public affairs, civic obligations, and social perception. Nor, for that matter, did we, as the part of the public, give any mandate to the *New York Times,* Rupert Murdoch (brrr! . . . what a disgusting idea . . .), NBC, or *Newsweek* to represent us in *any* possible way, on *any* given issue. Mr. Grunwald's intimation of "semi-constitutionality" inadvertently unveils the *totalitarian* mindset of the press lords: they apparently have already reached the verdict that democratic representation is achieved by subscription not by ballot. It will take a bolder and more determined Ronald Reagan to remind them that it is not so, and cut them to their proper size.

The *Chicago Tribune,* with its tradition of heavy-handed duplicity, brought some sort of relief to the dispute. In an editorial it duly ranted against the ban and "censorship," announcing:

> . . . once the invasion was underway the Pentagon should have made prompt arrangements for reporters to reach the scene, or at least to board the ships lying offshore. Because of the failure to do so, Americans for three days received sketchy, confusing and unreliable information on the situation.

Thus, the *Tribune* assumes—actually, it holds as a self-evident truth—that once the press is on location, it provides non-negotiably reliable, never confusing, information. The editorial-page editors, however, omitted to check their own letters-to-the-editor department, wherein a retired U.S. Army colonel responded to some of the *Tribune's* own journalistic practices on the subject of Vietnam:

> I had thought that the passing years had made me more tolerant of uninformed journalistic commentary on Vietnam, but Kenneth R. Clark proved me wrong when he wrote about a "dispirited American Army" abandoning Saigon. . . .
>
> The U.S. Army turned over the fighting to the South Vietnamese long before Saigon fell, and only a few advisers and the State Department people remained to be evacuated. The army that had been withdrawn earlier had abandoned nothing and had never been dispirited. It was maligned only by such people as Clark. His perpetuation of historical error and repetition of the doubtful lore of the antiwar faction exacerbates the open national wounds he refers to.
>
> I don't know how Clark came by his impression, but I was in the U.S. Army. We may have been puzzled, but we were far from dispirited. To say otherwise is the final insult to those who served and the dead we are so fond of numbering in the press.

But we do not need to go back that far in order to pinpoint the American press's mendacity, unreliability, and supercapacity to confuse minds. We now have Grenada and can see what the media are doing to it, what they are choosing *not* to say, and how they are assiduously working to deconstruct the rightness of Reagan's policy and decision. The media would have the public—the people—believe that the U.S. efforts are as laudable of those of a giant who claims a victory by taking on an ant: it is regularly pointed out that Grenada has a smaller population and only slightly more square miles than the District of Columbia—as if storing modern arms for entire armies, organizing espionage networks, plotting terroristic activities, and building up sophisticated naval bases requires more space than that offered by Martha's Vineyard. Mr. Albert Xavier, "former editor of Grenada's only independent newspaper, the *Torchlight*" (thus also a journalist, but obviously not a liberal New York-style one) who "left Grenada after the Bishop government closed his paper in 1979," according to his credit line in the *Wall Street Journal,* has published there an article in which he unveils the very scope of the subversion strategy invented in Moscow and Havana and centered on Grenada:

> The plan to subvert the elected governments of the Eastern Caribbean and replace them with communist-leaning revolutionary governments was hatched in 1976. Off the western coast of St. Lucia lies a rocky islet named Rat Island. It was here in 1976 that Maurice Bishop and Bernard Coard of Grenada, George Odlum of St. Lucia, Tim Hector of Antigua and a few other lesser-known communist sympathizers met in secret conference to plan the political future of the Caribbean.

No one, to our knowledge, referred to Mr. Xavier's article in the bastions of the American liberal press: being unable to witness the shooting, this press feels absolved from the duty to analyze the fray's real and concrete cause. Maurice Bishop, a former London pimp, a Brechtian character who rose to the depths of communism from the underclass and who overthrew a legitimately elected government and committed Grenada to the global communist planning, has not been exposed to much scrutiny in the pages of our most informative organs, either—in spite of the American people's right to know. Mr. Xavier had something to say about that matter:

> There is no doubt in the minds of West Indian political analysts that the plan to subvert the democratic governments of the Eastern Caribbean was coordinated by Fidel Castro, with Michael Manley as a willing ally. When Jamaica's current prime minister, Edward Seaga, won the election and turned out Mr. Manley, the Eastern Caribbean operation became more urgent. Thus, the full import of the Grenada episode will become clearer when the ashes have settled.

When the Cronkites, Grunwalds, et al., are swept into the dustbin of history, an excerpt from a letter of one John A. Phillips to his parents can serve as the most trenchant, perspicacious, and, in

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the same breath, painful encapsulation of the "people's right to know" issue:

> If by some bizarre turn of events here I get killed, please don't let anybody say anything leftist to the press, like (some other) families of Marines killed here.

Marine Sergeant Phillips has been killed in Lebanon, in the line of duty. □

Compassion Anyone?

Within a social stratum that may be described as *very* wealthy and *very* liberal, *The New Yorker* is venerated as the "Sovereign One"—which is the "in" synonym for the Lord in the new lectionary issued by those charming theologians from the National Council of Churches who have decided to rewrite the Book. Actually, for more than a decade, the magazine—nearly a sexagenarian—has been a sad spectacle of superannuated radicalism. Radicalism, as we all know, can be alluring, though never graceful, when it is worn by youth. To be a sixtyish radical and actually to take oneself seriously requires some sort of mental callousness, even if it is deeply embedded in that particularly American tradition that sees fun in senile kookiness, to which polite pity should be the proper response. Nothing better defines *The New Yorker* of today than its film critic—an elderly lady whose looks convey anything but sensual expertise—who salivates in lengthy, garrulous essays on the blessings of the sexual "revolution": her apotheosis of a movie that instructed teenage girls in oral sex is an odd exemplification of ludicrousness that renders both irony and skepticism helpless. This is why, as someone has already noted, the top-hatted Eustace Tilley (*The New Yorker's* emblem) has outlived his relevance: a representation of a revolutionary bandanna above a visage that reveals several costly face-lifts done in Manhattan beautification clinics would more accurately crystallize the truth.

In a recent elegant editorial, *TNY's* suave sages invited their readers to ponder the plight of the hungry and homeless—after the former had finished

savoring their filet mignon in their posh penthouses. After detailing the case histories of a half-dozen starving indigents, the editors displayed the careful fastidiousness that characterizes their style as they contemplated the question of moral responsibility. Discarding theory after theory, they finally settled on a satisfactory indictment which condemns everything without soiling anyone's tux:

> The system—the same system that treats most of us well—has done them [the poor] in; it's the system that mires them in racism, that works to deny social mobility and to concentrate wealth, that keeps public schools inadequate.

No one, though, is really to blame for this state of affairs, least of all *TNY* writers who innocently enjoy the best that this malevolent system has to offer:

> We usually are what we are through no fault of our own. And what some of us are is rich.

Something ought to be done about those nonrich people who aren't eating, of course, but apparently no one need forego such essentials as fashions from Fifth Avenue shops or subscriptions to refined magazines in order to donate money to charitable institutions. "It's not almsgiving that's needed," we're assured, but something else: "The system must be changed before poverty will start to disappear.... We must change the system in such a way that new generations do not grow up poor." We do not understand this kind of social determinism. Are both poverty and wealth surgically detached from the quality of a human being? What *other* system do the editors of *TNY* have in mind? That one, perhaps, in which nobody has anything, but in which a handful of radical journalists who serve ideological thugs have more than anyone else? And how can this change be effected by readers who are deeply involved with fashion designers and luxury cars, or by investment bankers who are best at building portfolios? *The New Yorker* explains patiently:

> We can vote for politicians who might raise our taxes, and for politicians who will make sure the bureaucracy works for poor people.

This we call the Metzenbaumian social ethics. The name is derived from one Senator Metzenbaum, a liberal multimillionaire who is a fanatical constructor of social programs paid for with skyrocketing taxes. He, naturally, is also willing to pay. Of course, even if he pays according to the highest bracket on the tax tables, he still has enough to eat filet mignon every night. The hardworking American, who *also* has to pay for the programs Sen. Metzenbaum promotes, is slipping ever closer to the poverty line as a reward for what he is "through no fault of [his] own . . .," that is, a carrier of the idea of self-reliance, work ethics, and human dignity. Sen. Metzenbaum does not ponder compassion, he serves it like a tennis ball—a dubious metaphor perhaps, but one that should be quite vivid for *The New Yorker's* readers. Its editors —that's another story. They deem systems in which compassion is enforced (by whatever means) as something much nobler than the homely capitalism of plumbers and grocers. □

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